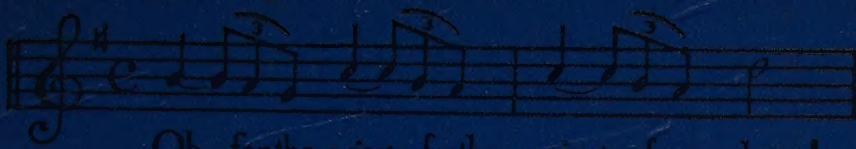

The First Soprano

By

Mary Hitchcock

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MARY HITCHCOCK

Author of "One Christmas"

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THE FIRST SOPRANO

CHAPTER I

IN THE CHURCH

It was Sunday morning in a church at New Laodicea. The bell had ceased pealing and the great organ began its prelude with deep bass notes that vibrated through the stately building. The members of the choir were all in their places in the rear gallery, and prepared in order their music in the racks before them. Below the worshipers poured in steady, quiet streams down the carpeted aisles to their places, and there was a gentle murmur of silk as ladies settled in their pews and bowed their heads for the conventional moment of prayer. Exquisitely stained windows challenged the too garish daylight, but permitted to enter subdued rays in azure, violet and crimson tints which fell athwart the eastern pews and garnished the marble font and the finely carved pulpit. They fell upon the silvering hair of the Reverend Doctor Schoolman as he pronounced the invocation and read the opening hymn, but they failed to reach the young stranger, seated behind, who accompanied him this morning.

Faultlessly in their usual current ran the services until the time for the anthem by the choir, and then the people settled themselves comfortably in their pews with expectant faces and ears slightly turned

to catch every strain from the well-trained voices in the gallery behind. This time the selection was from Mendelssohn and a soprano voice began alone:

"Oh, for the wings, for the wings of a dove!
Far away, far away would I rove!"

Clear, pure and true, the sweet voice floated through the church. With dramatic sympathy it yielded to the spirit of the melody and the pathos of the words. It touched hearts with a sense of undefined sorrow and longing. Madame Chapeau, the French milliner, who rented a sitting in the church of her patrons, sat with eyes filled with tears that threatened to plough pale furrows through the roses of her cheeks.

"In the wilderness build me a nest,"

suggested the sweet voice. Two weeks in a lonely country place had been far too long the summer before for Madame, and a wilderness was the last place she desired. But the plaintive song touched a sentimental chord and answered every purpose. Mr. Stockman, who sat midway of the center aisle, grasping his gold-headed cane, suffered the keen business lines of his face to relax and looked palpably pleased. He recalled the money contributed to the expense of the choir, and reflected that he would not withdraw a dollar of it. To be sure, he remembered that the services of this soprano, daughter of Robert Gray, the iron merchant and elder of the church, were gratuitous; but still he was glad to associate the thought of his money with the choir that could render such music. And presently the chorus joined in the song, and many voices added their harmony to the increasing passion of the cry:

"In the wilderness build me a nest,
And remain there forever at rest!"

Sensitive souls thrilled to the music, which unquestionably always added the capstone to the aesthetic enjoyment of this, the most elegant church at New Laodicea. The minister sat with a studied expression of approbation and subdued enjoyment. The young stranger at his side sat with eyes shaded by his hand.

The choir seated themselves with pleased relief, for there had been no noticeable flaw in the production. The leader's sensitive face looked as nearly satisfied as it ever became over any performance. The organist slid off his bench and dropped into his chair to listen to the sermon—or, perhaps not to listen. But he had done his part well, faithfully filling in all the interstices of time between numbers of the program, so that the congregation had been bored by no moments of silence nor thrust back upon the necessity of meditation.

There were a few words of introduction, and it was found that the stranger was to speak. He was just a trifle surprising in appearance, for his coat had no ministerial cut, and was even a bit more suggestive of business than of the profession of divinity. But he was soon forgiven this; for his voice was even and pleasant, and he looked at his congregation with a pair of frank blue eyes, while he spoke with the simplicity of a man who has somewhat to say to his fellowmen and says it honestly. His text excited no curiosity, for it was this: *"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."*

In the choir Miss Winifred Gray had composed herself to listen. Fortunately she was at the rear of her

admiring hearers and had not to confront their faces as she sat down. She had enjoyed her part exceedingly. She loved her music, and the greater its pathos the keener her enjoyment in rendering it. There was a subtle sense of power, too, which she did not analyze, in moving a whole congregation to admiration and sympathy. With her whole heart she had entered into her musical work, in which the church divided attention with the drawing-room and an occasional concert. She sat now in pleased triumph and had no ears for the opening words of the young man's sermon. But it dawned upon her gradually that he was speaking from the words, "in spirit and in truth." He spoke of the former worship which dealt with externals of place and method—with "carnal ordinances imposed until a time of reformation"; and then of a new era of worship which Christ had brought in, wherein true worshipers draw nigh to God, not with sensuous offerings, but "in spirit and in truth."

Winifred could not follow all that he said, for it seemed a new and strange language for the most part, but she gathered this: that somehow Christ had opened the way for all believers into the very spiritual presence of God, into a holy place not made with hands (and the more real because it was not, being God-made and eternal), and that there worshipers stood before eyes of perfect discernment, unclothed by outward semblance, and offered "spiritual sacrifices" unto Him. It was a beautiful picture, but awful. Winifred shuddered as she thought of the august Presence that inhabited the Holiest of All that the minister spoke of, and wondered if she would dare approach it. To stand in naked spirit before eyes of flame and to be read through and through, daring

to speak no unmeant word, but only that which the heart designed in absolute sincerity! Was worship in spirit such a real thing as that? Was she a true worshiper? Why was she there that morning? She glanced about the building, with its arches and columns, its stained windows, and almost perfect arrangement of form and color. But the minister was saying:

"This material structure is not the house of God. No longer is God localized to our faith as in the days of symbol and shadow, when surely Jerusalem was 'the place where men ought to worship.' For the symbol has given place to the 'truth,' and in that, 'in spirit,' men worship. But while in every place, or, better still, without reference to place—'neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem'—true worshipers shall find Him, still His spiritual people form a temple for His manifestation, wherever they are gathered, and there is He. 'In the midst' He takes His rightful place, and that place we must accord Him—the center of our heart's attention and worship."

Winifred resumed her question. Why had she come? Was it to meet that One, to gaze in spirit upon His pierced hands and side, as the minister was saying, and to rejoice in Him as the risen Lord? She did not quite know what he meant. She went back over the morning's experience, beginning with her dressing-room, when before her mirror she donned her new and very pretty silk dress and arranged all her faultless toilet, adjusting the modish hat that became so well her own type of beauty, fitted on the fresh, dainty gloves that should clasp her beloved music when she should open her throat and sing like a glad bird, delighting in its song, however plaintive. And then she had gone. Had she thought of Him in

all this? Winifred's honest soul said, No. But church? She had thought of "church," with all that it stood for of building, and congregation, and set order of things, and there had been a sort of subconscious satisfaction in the fact that going to church was a religious thing to do, and that to sing in the choir (especially for no pay, as she did) was very meritorious. But was it so?

The minister was saying:

"If worship is not sincere, it becomes, spiritually, an abomination. If, for instance, our singing, instead of being a true sacrifice of praise to God degenerates into the sensuous enjoyment of a 'concourse of sweet sounds,' it is no longer worship, and it is not even an innocent employment. However fine it may be as a musical entertainment, if offered as a *substitute for worship* it may be likened to the offering of 'strange fire,' which met such instant judgment in the time of Moses."

Winifred winced under the clear, bold words. There was a little well-bred stir in the congregation. Doctor Schoolman's disciplined countenance betrayed a startled moment and then relapsed into an expression of bland, but non-committal interest. Winifred glanced about to see how her neighbors were taking it. She looked first at George Frothingham, for he and she were unusually good friends. His handsome face showed only abstraction, and she knew he had not heard a word that was said. She glanced warily back toward the organ and saw the player in his chair, but he was indulging in a few winks of sleep. His duties at the theater the night before had illy prepared him for very wakeful attention to the sermon, and other influences were telling upon him, too, for the man of music knew the taste of wines. The

leader of the choir was listening. His penetrating eyes were fixed upon the calm-faced man in the pulpit, and an unconscious scowl bent his dark brows. Yet it was not an angry frown, but simply intent. He looked half defensive, half convicted.

The minister went on:

"I fear that this is an unusual way of looking at it, and that we are all too accustomed to pass unchallenged our professed worship. Vice may be so habitual and under such common sanction as to be mistaken for virtue. But surely in the most vital matter of our intercourse with God we do well to let every act be tested by the truth. It shall be so tested eventually, whether we will or no; and even now in the midst of the churches the Son of Man is walking, still with eyes of flame, and still He is saying: 'I know thy works.'"

Winifred's next excursion in thought away from the sermon led her to review her part of the morning program, and she wondered if the minister thought of it too. The hymns?—she had forgotten what they were. But the anthem—was it unto the Lord she sang her part? Was there an atom of sincerity in the sentiment she sang? The words were from a Psalm, she thought, and she did not really understand what David meant. Had she any clearer ideas as to what Winifred Gray might mean? She surely did not wish the wings of a dove, literally, nor to fly away into the wilderness. She loved her home and many friends and had no desire to escape from them or her surroundings. If it meant to fly away to heaven—? Surely she did not wish that! The world and "the things that are in the world" were very attractive to the young soprano. She had no wish for heaven save as an alternative from hell. What did it mean?

Was it a heart-rest that David longed for? But she had been conscious of no unrest—until just now. Honestly, the truth was that she had not meant anything! Was it worship? But her friends would tell her she sang it with feeling, she argued defensively, and then asked herself candidly, what sort of feeling? She had sung Mignon's song with equal sympathy the night before. She confessed the truth; it was dramatic instinct that led her in both songs, and the Spirit of God in neither.

"I am a hypocrite," she cried within herself, "and no true worshiper!"

Then she thought of the positive side of her action. While there was no offering to God, she had received in her own heart the subtle incense of the people's praise. Enveloped in its cloud she had sat until the sermon disturbed her. She wished the young stranger had not come to preach. Doctor Schoolman's sermons were nice, and learned, and elevating, and never gave her such uncomfortable thoughts! Had he preached this morning all might have gone on as before so pleasantly.

And now?—should it not go on? Could she think for a moment of stopping it all? Impossible! But to go on with it was—"abomination!" That was what the preacher said. Perhaps he was wrong, or she misunderstood. Doctor Schoolman would know. But what said her own conscience? After all, she knew the battle must be fought out there. Was it not sin to take sacred words on her lips and not mean them? How many times had she taken God's name in vain, pouring out pretended invocation to Him, while her heart addressed only the congregation for their approval! But it had been so thoughtless! He would surely forgive. But

now she had thought about it, and it could never be the same again.

By this time Winifred was thoroughly miserable. She pondered over and again what she should do, at times in imagination resigning her position in the choir; then saying:

"Impossible! It is absurd! Who ever heard of its being wicked to sing in the choir? How could I explain myself?"

Then she reflected that she would study to be earnest, that she would school herself to think of Him and sing to Him. She took her hymn-book and found the place of the last hymn, resolved to put sincerity in practice at once. It was chosen without reference to the unexpected sermon, and was the well-known psalm of love and longing which earnest souls have sung for many years:

"For thee, O dear, dear country,
Mine eyes their vigils keep;
For very love, beholding
Thy happy name they weep.
The mention of Thy glory
Is unction to the breast,
And medicine in sickness,
And love, and life, and rest."

"I cannot sing it!" Winifred almost sobbed to herself. "It is not true—to me."

Then she read on. Before, she would have been carried away with the rhythm and the graceful thought. But now as she read:

"Oh, sweet and blessed country
That eager hearts expect!"

"It's not true—it's not true!" she thought. "I can-

not sing these songs. I know nothing of their sentiment. I am not a true worshiper of the Father. I do not believe I know Him!"

Then Winifred covered her eyes with her hand. "'Thou desirest truth in the inward parts,'" the preacher was quoting.

The words sent a pang through her heart. "God has found no truth in me," she thought; "I have been a lie."

Then she sat in wretchedness, fighting back the tears that struggled to escape—tears of shame, remorse, wounded self-love, and grief that her favorite idol, a god whom she did know and had served well, was to be taken down from its niche in the house of the Lord and cast out. She heard little of the remainder of the sermon, and what she heard added to her misery; for it told of the joy of true worshipers when at last they should stand face to face with Him whom, having not seen, they love,—

> "All rapture through and through
> In God's most holy sight."

The sense of isolation, of exclusion from it all, was very painful; and Winifred did not know that this very knowledge of exclusion, and its grief, were harbingers of eternally better things. She stood with the others as they sang the closing hymn, and her own silence was unobserved, as she did not always join the chorus. She had recovered her composure by the time the benediction was pronounced and the organ was yielding an unusually lively postlude to whose strains she and George Frothingham descended the stairs together.

"The old chap is almost waltzing us out to-day,"

that gentleman remarked, referring to the organist. "Winifred, you outdid yourself to-day on that lovely thing."

Winifred smiled faintly. "Did you hear the sermon to-day, George?" she asked.

"Did I hear it? Well, that's good. Do I hear sermons when I go to church? But I confess to a little absentmindedness; not to equal that of our friend at the organ, however," and George laughed. Then he caught sight of a group of people in the vestibule below and exclaimed:

"Hello! There's your father and the preacher! I believe he is going to take him home to dinner. Don't look for me under your hospitable roof to-day, Winifred."

"Why?" she began.

"I have no taste for parsons. He'll talk the backs off the chairs. See if he doesn't. Good-by." And the young man strode carelessly away.

Winifred joined her mother in the vestibule, and they held a whispered consultation as to the probabilities of the young minister's going home with them. It seemed evident that Mr. Gray had taken him captive.

"Take him in the carriage and let me walk, mother," Winifred said. "I would much rather."

So she slipped away and did not meet the minister until dinner.

Hubert Gray, Winifred's only brother, had also been at church that morning. This was somewhat unusual, for Hubert was a sceptic, and he did not like to appear what he was not. But occasionally he went to hear what might be said and turn it over in his questioning brain. He was a young man of strong

aversions, and one of his special dislikes happened to be the unfortunate Doctor Schoolman.

"I hate cant," he declared. "His very tones are studied and unnatural. His voice quavers to order, and if I should see tears on his face I should think he had pumped them up someway for effect. I don't like to be practiced on. I should like a man to believe something earnestly and say it honestly."

And so he stayed away for the most part, but like many a man who is a sceptic, found that the subject of the Christ would not down, and he could not let it alone. So after absences he would go again to hear, though it should be only to gain fresh occasion for his doubts or cynical criticisms. To-day he was the first to arrive at home and met Winifred in the hall as she came in.

"The spiritual priesthood did very well to-day, Winnie," he said, by way of greeting. "I hope you all sang 'with grace in your hearts unto the Lord.' I am sure Frothingham did. I saw him—eh, Winnie, what's the matter?"

For Winifred had turned a quivering face toward her brother.

"I didn't, Hubert," she said. "There was no grace in my heart." And then she hastened up the stairs to her room.

"Hm-m!" said Hubert reflectively, and repeated the observation at intervals until dinner was served.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE OF GRAY

THE family gathered for dinner with its usual decorum. Winifred sat opposite the young minister, and Hubert was beside him. Mr. Robert Gray carved the turkey with his usual skill and the sharpest of knives. He began his anticipated discussion with the preacher:

"Your sermon fitted pretty closely to-day, Mr. Bond," he said, as he separated a joint successfully.

"Did it really?" said Mr. Bond, with a smile that lit up a singularly pleasant face. "I am glad to hear it. That is what sermons are for, I believe?"

"Just so," said Mr. Gray, and he added with a little chuckle of enjoyment, "I like it—I like it. We need it, I assure you. There is no question about that. Why, Winnie, not a bit of the fowl? You are losing your appetite, child. Yes, sir, we need to be stirred up. If there is anything I believe in, it is sincerity. But now, don't you think, Mr. Bond, that you put it just a little grain too stiff?"

"In what way, Mr. Gray?"

"Well, now, I say the Apostles' Creed. I know it by heart. I don't know how many hundreds of times I have said it. It says itself. Perhaps that is why I don't always stop to think what it does say. But I do not suppose there is a word in it that I do not believe. Now if my mind happens to wander while I am saying it—if it happens, mind you—"

"Father, Julia is waiting for Mr. Bond's plate," interposed Mrs. Gray softly from the other end of the table.

"I beg your pardon." Then, as the delinquent plate went to its destination, "If my mind happens to wander to some little matter of business, or something or other, while I say the Creed—*am I a hypocrite?*"

The merchant propounded the question with a note of triumph, as though the bold-spoken minister were rather cornered now. Mr. Bond answered respectfully, but with subdued amusement:

"I think, Mr. Gray, that the Lord would recognize the absence of insincere intent, but that so far as worship goes, you might as well set some Tibetan prayer-wheels going."

A gleam of enjoyment shot from Hubert's eyes, and a laugh almost escaped him.

"Ah, just so—just so!" said Mr. Gray, a little discomfited. "But would it be better not to say it?"

"It would be better to mean it," said Mr. Bond.

"He parries well," thought Hubert.

"Winifred," said Mrs. Gray, off whose smooth nature these discussions rolled harmlessly, "the music was very fine this morning."

Winifred, who would have preferred almost any subject to this, cast an appealing glance at her mother, but it was unheeded. She had hoped Mr. Bond would not recognize her as the singer.

Mrs. Gray went on: "Mrs. Butterworth, who sits just the other side of the partition from us, you know, was quite carried away. She looked volumes at me, but she just whispered 'heavenly!' She said after church she hoped you would come to her party next

week and bring your songs. You have such a gift, she said."

And Mrs. Gray herself sighed religiously at the thought of Winnie's "gift." Winnie could have sighed, too, but it was with torture.

Mrs. Gray was a comfortable lady, absorbed in the quiet machinery of a conventionally proper life. She loved her family, her church, and a moderate amount of society. She loved things. Quiet satisfaction beamed from the gentle eyes on the choice silver of the dining-room, on her blue antique china, on the costly, tasteful accessories of the drawing-room, and, indeed, on all the well chosen appointments of the quietly elegant home. Interest in her own person and its adornment had been gradually diverted toward Winifred, whose beauty, grace of manner, and accomplishments, were an unfailing joy. Now she sighed in quiet gratitude to the vague deity known as Providence for Winifred's peculiarly sweet gift. As to the sermon of the morning, she was one of those hearers in whose mind a sermon and its application do not necessarily go together.

Winifred felt two pairs of eyes upon her from across the table as her mother talked to her in a voice not intended to interrupt the gentlemen in their conversation. There were Hubert's eyes of darker brown than her own and very searching, and the preacher's blue eyes that looked inquiringly through rimless eyeglasses. She could think of no answer to her mother, and so bent her eyes silently upon her plate, while a flush rose to her temples. Mrs. Butterworth's rapturous "heavenly" was in strong contrast to the conviction of godless insincerity which filled her own heart.

Mercifully to her embarrassment her father began again:

"But do you not think, Mr. Bond, that we must take things as they are? Granted that there is a great deal of unreality in the church, what are we going to do about it? Can one man who sees the point work a revolution in the whole church? Must we not just take conditions as they are and make the best of them?"

"Perhaps we may not hope to revolutionize a whole church," replied Mr. Bond, "but," and his face grew stern with an expression that told of a battlefield already fought for and won, "he may refuse to add one unit to the aggregation of untrue worshipers, or to uphold an organized system of unreality. I sometimes fear, Mr. Gray," and there was a ring of sadness in his voice, "that we too readily take conditions as they are, and make the worst of them!"

"Yes, I am afraid you are right—you are right," said the merchant slowly. Then he added, "but so far you have given us only a negative remedy. My son here could go so far with you. He washes his hands of the whole matter."

Mr. Bond turned to Hubert inquiringly.

"Really?" he questioned.

"Yes," said Hubert, thus thrust unwillingly into the discussion, "I am no worshiper at all."

"And may I ask why?" queried Mr. Bond.

"Your book says that whoever comes to God must believe that He is, and that He rewards those who seek Him. I am not sure of either proposition, and so I do not pretend to come to Him."

The frank eyes looked through the eyeglasses pleasantly. "Are you sure of the contrary?" he asked.

"No," said Hubert honestly.

"Admitting the supposition that He is, and is a rewarder of them that seek Him, does it cover the ground of responsibility to ignore Him because you are not sure?"

"Perhaps not," said Hubert. "But," he added doggedly, "if He is, and wishes to be known and worshiped, He ought to be demonstrable."

Mrs. Gray looked a little frightened. She never liked to hear Hubert talk about those things, and it was so mortifying to have him take such a stand against the church and everything everybody—at least most respectable people—believed. She was sure he was saying something dreadful now. Mr. Gray looked apprehensive, too. Winifred's self-revelation of the morning made her feel like casting no stones at her brother.

Mr. Bond looked at Hubert mildly.

"I think you are quite right," he said.

Here the discussion seemed to end. Hubert could make no reply to the man who agreed with him. An instinct to fight for his position had sprung up, but he was disarmed by Mr. Bond's assent to his proposition. He was not accustomed to being met like that. His father's loyal policy had been to protect his household from infidel talk, and he had not taken too much pains to ascertain his son's point of view, and if possible, to lead him from it into light. Hubert had found some Christian people ready to argue with him who would admit no position he held, however logical, believing that every arrow from the sceptic's quiver must be a poisoned one. He withdrew in bitterness from such encounters. To-day Mr. Bond's honest sympathy with his outspoken conviction found a sensitive chord in the young man's stout-seeming heart.

Conversation drifted to lesser things until the

ample meal was finished, and the little company broke up. Mr. Gray was sure his guest would wish a little rest and quiet in preparation for the evening service, which assurance happily freed himself for the usual nap which his soul coveted after the Sunday early dinner. Mrs. Gray departed for her own pretty room, her dainty dressing gown, silk draperies, and gentle doze. Winifred went to her room to resume the battle that was on. Hubert betook himself to his accustomed walk.

Walking down the avenue graced by his own home, Hubert glanced across the street and saw, to his regret, the handsome figure and airy step of George Frothingham. He hoped that gentleman did not see him, for he disliked him and did not wish to be bored by a conversation. Hubert disliked Frothingham on two separate counts: first, because he was not the sterling quality of man Hubert thought he ought to be; and secondly because, being such a man as he was, he still dared raise his miserable eyes toward Winifred. More than any other object in the world Hubert loved his sister, and his grief was very hot and sore when it became apparent that she and George were "as good as engaged," as all their circle of friends affirmed. They were not actually so, the "George" and "Winifred" terms resulting from an acquaintance since childhood, and had Hubert been a praying man he would have prayed that such a consummation might never occur. He voiced his sentiments unmistakably to Winifred, but on this point they could not agree.

"It is one of your unreasonable dislikes," she said, and so they came perilously near a serious difference.

"He isn't genuine—he isn't manly," said Hubert;

"there is nothing to him. His name ought to have stopped with the first syllable."

Winifred had looked her indignation, and mourned that Hubert could not see the charming qualities that made Frothingham popular with many.

Hubert's wish that the young man should not see him was unrealized, and he was speedily joined by him.

"Hello, Gray," said Mr. Frothingham, affably. He was always affable to Hubert for obvious reasons. "I wonder if you are going to hear the Reverend Professor Cutting's lecture on the Higher Criticism? That's rather in your line, isn't it? You know they have found that a good lot of the Bible is all rot."

"I think they are a pack of asses," said Hubert, savagely, his opinions accentuated by dislike of his questioner. "Indeed I am not going."

"Whew-w! You surprise me, Hubert. I thought you were a bit of a sceptic yourself?"

"So I am, but I am not proud of the fact. My doubts are quite enough for my own enjoyment without listening to Prof. Cutting's unbeliefs."

"But you know he talks from the Christian standpoint. He is not an unbeliever."

"Isn't he! That's just what I object to in those men. If they would confess themselves companions of the sceptical writers whom I have read and speak from a Free Thinkers' platform, I would have some respect for them. What do they believe that they did not? They respected the life and teachings of Jesus, but did not believe in His inerrant knowledge nor assumption of divinity. I do not see how any man can claim to be a *Christian* and not believe that what Jesus claimed for Himself was true. If not true, He was either a deluded man and so unfit to lead others

into absolute truth, or He was a liar and morally unfit to teach. I wonder that these men can't see through a ladder, for all their learned research."

"You are pretty hard on them, Hubert."

"I am saying the simple truth. I tell you I have no respect for those men. To profess to be Christians and from within the fort batter down its fortifications isn't honest."

"That's right," said Frothingham, who, having no certain convictions of his own, was prepared to enjoy a racy tirade from either side.

"So you are wrong, you see," said Hubert, "in thinking Prof. Cutting's lecture in my line. When I get ready to open a broadside against the Christian religion, I'll not put on a ministerial coat and collar to do it in. You'd be shot in war if the enemy caught you in their clothes—and you'd deserve it!"

"That's right," laughed George again. "Tell me when you are going to deliver your broadside."

"It will not be very soon," said Hubert. "I do not find such comfort in my doubts as to give me a missionary call to spread them."

They came to a turn in the road and parted. Hubert had had a more animated conversation with his sister's friend than he remembered ever to have had before. He strode on alone through the park whither his steps had taken him, still pursuing the same line of thought.

"No," he reflected, "why should I seek to communicate my doubts? I never knew a man to be worse for believing in Jesus Christ. I believe some men have been better for it. Certainly I do not admire the company I am in."

His mind reviewed a company such as would be called together by an infidel cause, and he recoiled

from it. He saw socialist faces of the baser type, ready but for the occasion to blossom into anarchism; he saw clever women whose bold loosening of the yoke of conventional religion had relaxed also the hold of conventional morals, and he was glad Winifred was not among them; he saw the face of Doctor Bossman, the leader of the cause, tall, massive-browed, handsome, with bold, full, outstanding eyes, a man of defiant words, of jovial popularity, and egregiously self-centered. Into the young man's mind, in contrast to the proud face, there flashed fragments of the words of the Nazarene: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children!" He saw other faces not so typical, and found himself seated amongst them, and abhorred the fraternity cemented by a common unbelief—a cold negation. He was unhappy. He found no territory on which to stand. He hated the cant and formalism that chilled him in the fashionable church. He hated the insolent creed of the deist, and the ignorance of the agnostic. He seemed to be hating almost all things with himself included. If he had been sure there was a God who heard mortals pray, he would have cried to Him to deliver him from so wretched a position. But he roused himself from his reverie and sought to throw to the winds his unhappy feelings. He walked back to the house endeavoring to think of to-morrow's business, and determining to give himself to an interesting book when he got there.

Winifred had a headache which was opportune. By it she excused herself from tea and from church that evening. Her father carried her apologies to the leader of the choir. Mr. Gray alone of the family listened to the evening discourse, and he listened well,

for the young minister spoke again with truth and earnestness. The machinery of the meeting moved smoothly, and George Frothingham sang with much feeling, "If with all your hearts ye truly seek Him."

In Winifred's room the light burned late. The battle waged there saw many tears and the confirmation of the edict put forth in the morning service that the false god must be taken from its niche in the house of the Lord.

"I will not be a hypocrite," Winifred said to herself. "I will not go through a theatrical display, however refined and solemn, and call it worship. I am no true worshiper."

Then she burst into fresh tears, in which mingled grief that she was not a worshiper, and sorrow that she must leave an occupation and associations so dear. It seemed like taking out a good part of her life, for Winifred was young, and things loved were ardently loved.

There was one who contested the ground with her in her room that night, and told her she was no worse than others; that they were as thoughtless and insincere as she; that her course and theirs passed under the common sanction of churches everywhere, and that there was no reason why she should be singular amongst all others. Why should she be disturbed from the commonly accepted course by a single sermon preached by a stranger, and he a young man? Doctor Schoolman had never said such things. She might at least wait and talk it over with him or some wise person. He might be able to show her that God did not really care whether people quite meant what they said in singing, and that it was a meritorious thing, as she had always thought, to sing about Him

to other people and to sing well. It might do people good. Some people had actually wept sometimes!

The last thought was very striking, for Winifred did not know well the Word which is able to discriminate between soul and spirit, and she mistook emotion for some sign of spirituality. These arguments pressed hard, and had in their favor the natural leaning of the heart that longed to go on with the loved employment. But there was another longing too, and it was to be honest. And underneath all was the true beginning of wisdom—the fear of God.

"The minister told the truth," she said. "And if everybody else goes on with the farce I will do as he said to father at dinner: 'refuse to add one unit to the aggregation of untrue worshipers.' I'll join Hubert outside of it all before I will go on!"

Then she wept afresh, for the vision of isolation "outside of it all" was too painful. The presence of God had grown awesome and the light of His eyes intolerable, but outside was darkness unbearable. She flung herself down beside the bed where many a time she had "said prayers" at night, and sobbed:

"O God, I am not a true worshiper, but I wish I were! I have drawn nigh to Thee with my lips while my heart was far from Thee. I have been a lie. Oh, make me true! make me true!"

After this outburst of prayer she was calmer, but remained silently upon her knees by the bedside. Gradually there came to her memory the substance of other words the minister had said:

"Into the presence and unto the very heart of God there is a blood-bought way opened by our blessed Christ for the most wicked one who wishes to take it."

"Is there a way for me," she prayed, "a way to come to Thee just as I am?" And the sound of her

own words brought back the memory of the old song, familiar since her childhood:

> "Just as I am without one plea,
> But that Thy blood was shed for me,
> And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
> O Lamb of God, I come!"

"O God," she cried, "I can sing that! I do come, just as I am—I do come!"

A sweet sense of rest, such as she had never known, stole into Winifred's heart. Some One seemed to be welcoming her with ineffable tenderness. She was not out in the dark, but was at home with God. The awful presence she had dreaded was infinitely sweet. At last she stood in the Holy Place, still foolish, weak, unworthy, but with the glory of Another's name covering her as with priestly robes, and she worshiped.

CHAPTER III

THE CONFESSION

When Winifred awoke the next morning it was to wonder if it were really true—if she had come to God and He had received her. A sweet rest still in her heart testified to a burden lifted. Her Bible lay open on the little table where she had found the minister's text while fighting her battle the day before. A leaf or two had blown over, and she looked down on the sixth chapter of John and read,

"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Renewed assurance came with the words.

"I believe it," she said to herself. "I have been very false, but He is true. He says the truth. I believe it."

The thought of the choir scarcely entered her mind now in her new-found joy. The question, to sing or not to sing, had shifted to the deeper one of relationship to God, and the peace that came with its settlement overshadowed everything else. She went down to breakfast with a light heart and very cheerful countenance. Hubert looked at her in surprise from under gloomy brows. His own had been a restless night.

"Has your headache gone, dear?" asked her mother solicitously.

"Oh, long ago, Mother," said Winifred. She wanted to tell her mother the better news than of a headache gone, but did not know how to begin.

They talked of ordinary things until breakfast was nearly over. Then Mr. Gray said:

"Mr. Mercer was sorry to miss you from the choir last night, Winnie, and hoped you were not going to be ill."

"Thank you, Father. Mr. Mercer is always very kind."

"He hopes you will surely be at the rehearsal Friday night, as he expects to take up some specially fine music."

Winifred's heart beat violently as she summoned courage to say:

"I do not think I shall sing in the choir any more, Father."

"Why—what, Winnie? What's that you are saying? You not sing in the choir any more?"

"What are you saying, Winifred," added Mrs. Gray.

Winifred nerved herself for the statement. It might as well be said now as ever, while they were all together.

"Yes, Father," she said, "I do not think I can sing in the choir any longer. I saw very clearly yesterday that I had never been a true worshiper. I have never meant the words that I sang. I have scarcely thought about God while I sang words about Him or addressed to Him. Many of them I could not say honestly. It has all been for effect, and to—to please you all. So I—I concluded—I—couldn't go on any longer."

It had been a very difficult speech, and Winifred's voice sank at the end.

Mr. Gray looked very grave.

"You surprise me, Winnie," he said. "You surprise me very much. You should be conscientious,

surely, but you will let me say I think you are taking the matter too seriously."

Silent Hubert shot a reproachful glance at his father. In his estimation here was a case of downright honesty that called for applause, not repression.

"I think your father is right, Winifred," said Mrs. Gray faintly, and then she added, rather illogically, "but I do not understand just what you mean."

"Can I take the truth too seriously, Father?" asked Winifred, still speaking with an effort. It was an ingenuous question, but Robert Gray found it hard to answer.

"No," he said, after a moment's hesitation, "not truth itself, but we may get wrong ideas of it. But, Winnie," he added, with real sorrow in his voice, "I hope you do not mean to tell us that you will not hereafter try to worship God, since the past has been so unsatisfactory to you?"

"Oh, no, Father," said Winifred quickly, with rising courage as her experience of the night before came vividly to her. "I have more to tell. I was very unhappy about it all last night, and—I prayed" —she blushed, for it was new to speak of such things —"I prayed, and it came to me that there was a way to come to God just as I was, and He would make me a true worshiper; and I came."

Winifred's embarrassment could not quite cover her joy as she made her confession. The father looked relieved.

"I am thankful,—very thankful, Winnie," he said. "You did nobly. That was quite right—quite right. But now I do not see that you need give up your singing, but that you might go on sincerely where you have failed before."

He looked a little anxious, for her singing in the church was very dear to him.

Winifred's brow clouded. "I fear I cannot, Father. Not now, at least."

"No? Well, we'll talk about it later," he said kindly, and they left the breakfast table.

In the hall Hubert waited for Winifred with his own form of benediction:

"You're a brick, Winnie," he said, and planted a kiss upon her fair forehead.

She smiled and returned his kiss with an affectionate caress. Hubert's slangy praise was dearer to her than any polished compliment from another source.

Hubert did not understand why he hated the world and things a little less as he walked to business that morning, the stone walk answering to his usual sharp, decisive step. He did not know that it was a gleam of something pure and true, of a religion not in word but in deed, that had flashed across his path and mitigated its darkness.

Winifred had a long talk alone with her father in the library later in the day. She had thought out her reasons, and understood better, herself, the instinctive feeling that led her not to resume her place in the choir under the altered conditions.

"I am just beginning to worship, Father," she said, "and I feel I could do so better out of sight—for awhile, at least. You do not know the temptation it would be to fall back into the old way. I am afraid I could not stand it. I would rather just slip into the congregation beside you, Father, and sing to God when my heart sings, and keep still when it doesn't."

So her father yielded the point to her conscience.

"God bless you, Winnie," he said with glistening eyes, as he stroked her chestnut locks. "It may be I have been a bit of an idolator, myself."

Poor Mrs. Gray sighed, and quite gave up trying to understand Winifred's strange position. She hoped she would be able to give some suitable reason for withdrawing, and not set the whole church talking about her peculiar views. She remembered hopefully that her daughter had suffered from laryngitis not long ago, and she mentally nursed the almost vanished trouble into proportions that would forbid her singing much. She was sure Dr. Lansing would give an opinion to that effect now. But, dear me! as for herself, she did not know how she should ever sit in that church and hear anyone else sing in Winifred's place!

It was to be feared that there were many others who would find it difficult to sit in that church if their own natural wishes and tastes were not gratified there. What it was to be gathered "in My name," as the Lord Jesus had said,—into the name of Him whose flesh with its longing and loves had been carried pitilessly to the cross, that from its death there might spring forth for all His own life in the Spirit unto God—what this was, few at New Laodicea knew; nor what it was, so gathered, to behold Him in the midst. Oh, lonely heart without the door of His own house! He knocks patiently, not in the hope that the whole household will hear Him, but for "any man" who has ears to hear and will open to Him.

Winifred had another task before her that day, and she did it promptly. She did not know how really in her ready obedience she was walking in the steps of "the father of all them that believe," who, when Isaac was to be offered, rose early in the morning to go about the sacrifice. She went straight to Mr. Mercer, the leader of the choir, and told him of her withdrawal. She told her story with simplicity and dignity, and it commanded his respect.

"I honor your convictions, Miss Gray," he said. "We shall find it hard to fill your place, and I am very sorry you are going. But I would not for a moment urge you to remain. As I say, I honor your convictions. I only wish I had the courage of them myself."

His face grew heavy. He knew well the deity that led him to that place, and the anxious care that governed each Sunday's work. To bring his choir to the perfect standard of musical merit which his artist soul craved was his ambition. He knew pleasure as he approximated to that goal, and vexation almost to despair when he fell far short. He knew it was not before God but at another shrine he poured out his soul's libation.

"I know I am not a worshiper," he said. "I have never professed to be a Christian—oh, I am not a Mohammedan or a Hindu!—but I do not profess to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. I should not like," he said reflectively, "to add to a life indifferent to my Creator the insult of a mock worship."

He bent his brows heavily to consider if such a course were really his. "I would leave the whole thing to-day," he said vehemently, "as you are doing, Miss Gray, if I could. I would follow other lines in my profession, but I am in this now and it is my living. It means bread and butter to those dependent on me."

He paused, and Winifred said nothing but looked at him with strong sympathy. He went on:

"It will not excuse me, I suppose, but whose is the greater sin? Is it mine, or theirs who hired me? I thought of it professionally. If one honest man had met me with the question, 'Can you lead that part of our worship to God in spirit and in truth?' I should

have known that I could not, and said so. Then I should have turned my attention to secular paths where secular men belong. But there's the rub! Not one of them thought of it, I suppose. What a farce it is! The minister yesterday talked of incense rising to God. It doesn't get beyond their nostrils, I think. You know that man—what's his name?—he's a stock broker, who sits down the right aisle? Well, you know there was a talk once of dismissing the quartette, and retaining only the chorus (under my direction) to reduce expenses. That man declared if the quartette were dismissed he would leave the church. He is not a member anyway, I think, but he pays! There is worship for you! I tell you, the people glut their own souls with good music, and go home thinking they have worshiped God. Oh, I wish there were reality in the world!"

Mr. Mercer threw his head back and ran his fingers nervously through his wavy locks. His eyes were burning and there was a bright red spot on either cheek.

Winifred spoke out impulsively:

"Oh, Mr. Mercer, there is reality! I know there is somewhere, and I—I am just beginning—but I mean to be a true worshiper, myself."

He looked at her, and the gleam in his dark eyes softened.

"Forgive me," he said, "I spoke too strongly. Yes, I believe there is reality—a little—somewhere," and he smiled. Something in her soft brown eyes as he looked in them carried him many years back, when eyes something like them looked down on him, while a voice sang sacred words which he knew the heart loved well. Yes, there was reality somewhere.

CHAPTER IV

ADELE

WINIFRED awoke Tuesday morning with melody in her heart. She moved about her room with the exhilaration of a fresh joy in living. She took her Bible, which still wore the genteel, unsullied dress of a stranger, and turned to the place she wished to read. She had not got beyond the text of Sunday:

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshiper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

She pondered the text. "Shall worship the Father," she mused. "Oh, how sweet! That august One whom I feared is '*the Father.*' He loves me!"

She went with her book to the open window and stood, a fair priestess in her white morning dress, and looked out over a portion of her Father's wide domain. Oh, how warm and bright the sunlight that lit all things with glory! How fair were the distant hills beyond the city, with their varied dress of wood and meadow! In the garden below, how each group of flowers and the green sward answered with joy to the caress of the sun. How exultantly the lilies stood, and she could catch the incense from the bed of tiny clustering flowers nearest her window. She lifted her face toward the sky of melting summer blue, and sang softly:

"Holy, holy, holy; Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth and sky and sea;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty;
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!"

She looked again at the words whose entrance had given light, and read farther: "For the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

"He has been seeking me!" she cried, and some glimmering apprehension of the great love of the Father which seeks the fellowship of sincere and simple children, made her bosom heave and her eyes fill with tears. *"He loves me,"* she repeated as before, and her heart nestled itself in the great truth like a bird that has found its nest.

Presently she looked again from her window and saw Hubert walking in the garden.

"Dear Hubert!" she said to herself. "I wish he knew."

With an impulse she laid her book hastily down and ran down the stairs and into the garden. She flew noiselessly across the soft grass and surprised Hubert from behind, clasping his arm with a cheerful "Good morning!"

He looked down on her glowing face and kissed it.

"How bright you look," he said. "Were you up with the birds? I heard you singing your matins with them."

"Did you hear me?" said Winifred, with a blush at being overheard.

"Yes. What makes you so happy, Winnie?"

"Oh, Hubert," she cried, and she clasped his arm more tightly, "My heart is almost breaking with joy! I think I have begun—to know God!"

He looked at her with a surprised hunger in his dark eyes.

"And do you find the knowledge such a joy?" he asked, with deep sadness in his own voice.

"Oh, yes, Hubert," she said. "He is so good!"

Later in the day a small breeze swept in the front door of the Gray Mansion, past the maid, up the stairway, and to the door of Winifred's little sitting-room. It came with the person of Miss Adèle Forrester.

"Hello," said a bright voice. "Anybody here?"

Winifred rose from her quaint little window-seat with an expression of pleasure.

"Oh, Adèle! I am so glad to see you."

The two young ladies kissed each other and sat down to talk with the easy familiarity of old friends.

"Dear!" cried exclamatory Miss Forrester. "I am out of breath!—I have raced so! I left home an hour ago, but was beguiled by some fascinating bargains in Butterworth's windows. Do see that love of a thing for ninety-eight cents. Did you ever see such a bargain? I wouldn't let them send it for I wanted you to see it."

The fascinating trifle was admired, and then Miss Forrester flew at the chief matter of her visit enthusiastically.

"Do you know what is in the wind, Winifred? Professor Black, who leads the choir in the Linden Street church, is going to get up a comic opera with a cast from the various choirs, and I am invited. We are to go to Northville and give it in the little one-horse theater there. Won't it be gay? We shall astonish the natives of that small town! Have you had your invitation?"

Winifred shook her head.

"How calm you are. I am very much excited about it already. You know I like that sort of thing. It isn't decided what we shall give, but probably Pinafore, or Patience, or some old thing. They won't care at Northville. Do say what you think of it, Winifred? Don't be so unecstatic."

Winifred smiled, not very merrily. "I can't get ecstatic," she said. "I shall not be in it."

"You will not be in it!" Adèle cried. "Oh, why not?"—coaxingly. "Doesn't your father approve of it?—or your mother?—of going off like that, I mean? It will be perfectly proper. We shall be chaperoned."

"Oh, that's not it," said Winifred. "I have left the choir."

Adèle opened her bright eyes wide in astonishment. "Left the choir!" she exclaimed under her breath, and then leaned back in her chair with a gesture of comical despair of expressing herself.

Winifred could not help laughing at her friend's dismay. She said nothing and Adèle soon recovered herself.

"A little tiff with the leader or somebody?" she queried. "Such things are not unknown to us. I am prepared to take your part, Winnie, right or wrong. But you don't mean you've left for good? Oh, come and sing with us at St. John's—that would be lovely!"

Winifred girded herself mentally for her task. She and lively Miss Forrester had never discussed spiritual things together. They spoke freely of their choirs and of church, but that never seemed dissonant with the most frivolous social things. Now as Winifred thought of the real Holy Place and the worship there "in spirit and in truth," it seemed difficult to speak of it. She began bravely, and began at the beginning, with Mr. Bond's sermon. She rehearsed many of the things that he said, and told frankly of her own conviction of the truth and how it troubled her. Adèle listened gravely and with a sympathetic moisture in her eyes as Winifred told, with little

hitches in her voice and evident effort at self-control, of her determination to leave the theater of her unreal worship, and then of the way she had found into the real presence of God and of His forgiveness. She paused here, and Adèle put her arms impulsively about her and kissed her.

"Winnie," she said, "you know I always loved you. I love you better than ever now."

Then they both cried, though they could not have explained to each other why. Adèle was the first to recover herself.

"I am such a goose," she said. "I always cry. But now, Winnie," she added, "are you not going to keep on singing, only 'in spirit and in truth,' as you say?"

"I hope I shall keep on singing," said Winifred, slowly, "but I dare not trust myself, just now anyhow, to go on with the choir. I am so used to singing for applause"—and she blushed at the remembrance of such a motive in the house of the Lord—"or for music's sake, I am afraid I should find myself doing so still. I mean to worship God truly," and a look of determination settled the sensitive face into resolute lines; "and I shall try to do that which will help me most to that end. It seems to me now that that will be to join the others unobserved. Perhaps I shall see it differently some day, but now I feel it safer to put my poor, vain, little self as far out of sight as possible and try to think of God."

"You are a dear, honest little thing!" cried Adèle affectionately. Then she added very seriously, "but it almost seems to me that if your objections are right they might apply to the whole system."

Winifred looked perplexed. She had dimly thought of that. The word "system" recalled Mr.

Bond's phrase, "an organized system of unreality," which she had turned over in her mind a number of times. Would he call the choir that? She thought of the leader, who professed nothing as a Christian; of the organist, who, she must admit, was a drunkard; of George Frothingham with his careless indifference; and of herself of two days ago. Perhaps there were others—very likely there were—who sang with grace in their hearts unto the Lord, but it certainly looked as though that were no object in their selection. But she thought of Doctor Schoolman, who raised no objections and always sat with such an expression of bland repose while they sang. She thought of the elders—her own father among them—and, indeed, of common consent everywhere in all the churches; at least, all she knew. Who was she, who was only "just beginning to worship," that she should entertain ideas contrary to them all?

"I don't know," she said hesitatingly to Adèle, "I hope you will not think my ideas revolutionary. I can't judge for others—others so much wiser than I. But, for myself, I think I see the way I ought to take." And so she settled the matter for herself, on her own convictions.

"Perhaps you are right," Adèle said.

She could not speak further of the opera which seemed awkwardly out of place in the light of what Winifred had said. After a pause she said:

"I'm afraid we are all hypocrites more or less, but it is a wonder we had not thought of it before. But, do you know, I've sometimes thought it rather queer that Mr. Francis should sing in our choir? He is a confessed infidel. I do not believe our rector knows it. I do not think he would allow it. Mr. Francis just drifted into the choir when we needed a basso

very much. But, when you think of it, isn't it blasphemy to take the name of the Lord, whom he professes not to believe in, so solemnly upon his lips in church?"

Winifred consented that so it seemed to her.

Then a sudden recollection amused Miss Forrester. "Speaking of worshipers," she said, "now there is my precious Cousin Dick. How do you think he occupied himself in the midst of Morning Prayer a couple of Sundays ago? The rogue! I certainly was keeping the run of the service, but it was edifying to see his head bowed so devoutly until he passed a slip of paper over to me. What do you think was on it? Not a suddenly inspired hymn, but some doggerel lines about

> "'A certain young woman
> Who sang high soprano.'

"I looked daggers at him, but of course he saw I wanted to laugh. Then he looked such a picture of rapt piety! Oh, he is *a case!*" And Adèle gave way to the laughter she had smothered in church.

Winifred smiled, too, as she thought of the irrepressibly merry youth. But her pleasure was not as unmixed as it would have been three days before. Henceforth, any jest to be quite enjoyed must be free from taint of irreverence toward holy things. She had "begun to know God," and the knowledge gave a sensitiveness to the honor of His name and the things of His house.

Adèle recovered from her mirth and resumed the subject seriously.

"I am afraid we are sorry worshipers, when you come to look at it," she said. "If our office is really such a sacred one—and I see it must be, if we take it

seriously—why, then, we ought to be pretty good people; earnest, and reverent, and all that, I mean. But it doesn't seem to be our distinguishing trait," and she smiled. "Not mine, at least. I ought not to generalize too much. I am sure there are persons in our choirs who live beautiful, devoted lives; but the lot I fraternize with mostly are not likely to go to the stake just yet for their piety. What awfully jolly dances the Emmanuel church choir gave last winter! I was invited two or three times and went. But you know it has struck me once or twice as a little odd that we church singers, *as such*, should go into that sort of thing. If some of us should stray into it individually it's nothing remarkable, I suppose. But isn't it a bit queer that, as a company, we should lead off in those things? I suppose," with a twinkle of malicious enjoyment in her eyes, "our Emmanuel church neighbors could not find vent for their joy in the Lord in Hosannas on Sunday, and had to work it off at their heels on week days."

Adèle enjoyed her own satire, but Winifred was too repentant to laugh.

"Oh, Adèle," she said, "it is dreadful that there has been no 'joy in the Lord' about it. At least, I never knew it in the choir. Christ was never the center of our thoughts" (she was thinking of Mr. Bond's sermon), "the object of devotion. If we worshiped anybody or anything outside of ourselves it was Music."

"Orpheus?" suggested Adèle.

"Yes," said Winifred, "we were pagans, I suppose. But oh, Adèle, God is so good to forgive! It seems as though He were not looking at it at all—as if it had never been."

Adèle looked at her friend narrowly. "Winnie,"

she said at length, solemnly, "I know what has happened. You are converted."

Winifred opened her eyes in surprise. She had not thought to so define her new experience. Adèle went on:

"We don't talk much about it in our church, you know. But I used to go sometimes with old Auntie Bloom—she was so blind she couldn't see the sidewalk—to a little Methodist church of some sort, Free, or Reformed, or something, and they made a great deal of that. Auntie Bloom used to get rather excited over it herself sometimes when she 'testified.' I used to duck my head when she waved her arms about. 'A new creature!' she used to shout. 'There's nothing like being a new creature!' " And Adèle quoted the old lady with good-natured mimicry.

Winifred's face glowed. "No," she said, "there's nothing like it!—if that is what has happened to me."

Adèle looked at the happy face covetously. "You look as though it were good, Winnie," she said, and added meditatively: "I think it is all true about it. But you know, Winnie, when I was confirmed I really meant to be good. It was so solemn, and I thought I never should forget that dear old bishop's hand on my head. But I haven't turned out much of a saint, you know, dear."

"I never thought you were wicked, Adèle," said Winifred.

"Well, I never robbed a bank," said Adèle, "but there's no question about my being 'this worldly' enough."

Winifred did not know just how to answer this. It seemed a charge that would cover both their previous lives. In a moment's silence a sweet-toned clock on the mantel softly struck a half hour.

"Oh, I must be gone!" cried Miss Forrester, "and we haven't talked about half—"

"Do stay to lunch," interrupted Winifred.

"Impossible, dear. I am due at home—half an hour ago!" and she laughed at the discrepancy between her appointment and appearance. "Good-by, Winnie." And she was off.

The two, very opposite in temperament, were very warm friends. Winifred saw beneath a light exterior a quantity of good, sound sense and a warm heart. She was a frequent guest at their house. Mrs. Gray liked her, though deploring her occasional indulgence in slang. Mr. Gray enjoyed her racy conversation, and Hubert professed a dislike of her volatile qualities. This last fact grieved Winifred, who liked her friend to be appreciated.

"She has a rather frivolous exterior," she once explained to Hubert, "but she is really very sensible."

"One would like to hear from the sensible interior occasionally," he replied, and Winifred withdrew from the defense. She was the more grieved by his indifference to her friend because, with her quick intuition, she had half guessed at a secret liking in Adèle for her cynical brother.

To-day at luncheon Winifred ventured to offer him the information:

"Adèle Forrester was in to see me this morning."

"I heard her giggle," he replied laconically, and Winifred subsided into silence.

CHAPTER V

IS GOD DEMONSTRABLE?

THE scene of the morning in the garden haunted Hubert during the hours of business that day. Matters were attended to with his accustomed skill, but always an undercurrent of memory presented to him Winifred's beaming face and her announcement, "I think I have begun to know God."

"I wish I knew Him. I wish I knew the truth," he repeated to himself again and again.

Hubert had entered with heartiness into his father's business, and though still young had already attained a partnership in it. "Robert Gray & Son" read the clear, uncompromising sign, and the name of no firm in the city was more respected. Hubert's devotion to business, rather than to more scholarly pursuits, was a deep gratification to the father, who enjoyed his son's fellowship and found help in his fresh enterprise and keen foresight.

To-day Hubert was glad when the last matters were attended to and he was able to go home. At dinner he was abstracted and silent, and retired to his own apartments. Just off his sleeping room was a smaller one which constituted his laboratory, for Hubert was a man of science in his leisure hours. This room was the one discomfort of poor Mrs. Gray, who feared explosions or electric shocks, and sighed many a time as she heard the door close after the entering form of her son. To-night it closed firmly, and had not opened again before slumber muffled the ears of the

apprehensive mother, nor had the light from the single gas burner ceased to throw out its yellow challenge to the mellow, midnight moonlight without. Could Mrs. Gray have looked within, she would have seen Hubert sunk in the depths of a leather covered chair, with his dark, frowning face leaning upon his hand. He was thinking.

Something like this was the matter of his thoughts:

In this little room questions had been asked and answered. From the standpoint of the known, or even from the conjectured, excursions into the unknown had been undertaken, and the explorer returned with trophies of ascertained fact. How had it come to pass? Obedience to the laws of force revealed had brought its recompense of further revelation. How humbly, with what child-likeness, he had followed those subtle laws propounded to him by others; laws whose deep mystery he could in no wise understand, but which he believed, and, believing, demonstrated. Were there such principles to be observed in the spiritual realm? Were there laws of the unseen kingdom, which, if obeyed, brought demonstration? He gave a little gesture of impatience as he thought of the unthinking assertion of some that they would believe nought they could not understand!

"Stupid!" he muttered, and remembered an effort of his own, when a school-boy, to illuminate the mind of the gardener with a few scientific facts, only to be met with a loud guffaw of unbelief. Surely science had never yielded her treasures to sneering unbelief, but to humble, patient faith. Must he so find out God?

Again he pondered: Could God, if there were a God, be expected to be less mysterious, less wonder-

ful, less unsearchable than the subtle forces found in nature, and actually utilized, but never understood?

"What is electricity?" he asked himself. "I do not know, but I can use it. I know it is. So may not God be, invisible, uncomprehended, but real, and demonstrable to the man who applies himself to know Him?"

Hubert was very near a determination to thus apply himself. But should God be sought for as a force or as a personality? The old argument, hackneyed but true, spoke to him: The presence of design argues a designer. No blind force ever clasped the petals of a lily together, to say nothing of the arrangement of a universe. Had Hubert known it, there was a passage of Inspiration which read:

"The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his everlasting power and God head."

Now how to address himself to God—how to conduct this new experiment—was the question. He remembered the conditions of discipleship to science, and determined that he would follow them. First, there was child-likeness. A fragment of Scripture, words of Jesus Christ, came to him:

"Except ye . . . become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

How simple the principle. No pride of supposed knowledge, no dogmatism of unbelief might be brought to the door of this mysterious kingdom by the man who would enter in. Then, he must follow the things revealed if he would know more. What did he know about God? Or what must be true of Him, granted that He is?

"If He is," thought Hubert, "and is my Creator, then He must know me altogether."

"Thou God seest me."

It was a text—he did not know its connection—learned years before in Sunday-school, before his independence of spirit had withdrawn his neck from an unloved yoke. Now it spoke to him clearly. Surely God (if He were) must see him, and surely He must hear him. He did not consciously remember the words, "he that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" But thoughts of like nature passed through his mind. A creator who could bestow such marvelous faculties must Himself possess them in infinite measure. And a God who had given to His creatures such powers of communication, must surely have means to make Himself understood.

"If He is," said Hubert, "then He is great! He is infinite. I cannot measure His power in any line. Surely He can reveal Himself to me if He will. Is He willing?"

In the contemplation of God the man grew less and less in his own esteem. Would God reveal Himself to such an atom in the wide universe as he? Did He care for him or about him?

"God is Love," whispered memory, from the Book, and the suggestion beat upon the unarmored heart of the seeker, and was not unwelcome.

"I will put it to the test," he said to himself. "I will ask Him."

He rose from his chair and thought to fall upon his knees, but was resisted. An unlooked for struggle arose within him.

He had said to Frothingham that he was not proud of his scepticism, but now his independent thought

arose before him, an image not willing to be crucified. He saw the sneers of his fellow unbelievers, should he join the ranks of the religious. Suppose God should reveal Himself? Would he not be bound to serve Him? A vision of the Man who called Himself the Son of God arose dim and wraith-like, sorrowful, homeless, poor—crucified! If God revealed Himself, perhaps he must follow that Man! Was it worth it? Was it not better to go on as he was, rich, independent, self-governed? If he asked for light, was he ready to follow the light?

His hands clenched themselves in the struggle. The vision of self-abnegation was so real that it sickened him. Home, possessions, friendships, and his own life also, seemed demanded by the vision of that Man. But to turn back from the light that might be gained was to fall into a darkness more damnable and more desolate than before.

"Buy the truth and sell it not," urged a voice, and some glimmer of encouragement seemed in his imagination to smile from the face of the Man of Sorrows. In his decision the sweat broke from his brow and the veins stood in cords of agony. He fell upon his knees, and said aloud:

"O God, if Thou art, reveal Thyself to me, and I will serve Thee."

The solitary gas jet still flickered in the room, the moonlight shone without, the silent household slept No voice answered the young man's prayer, nor sensible Presence wrapped him about; but a crisis was marked in one life that night and the result was to be light and peace.

Hubert had not imagined what sort of a response should be made to his request, and it was well he had not. But he felt a sense of relief at a decision gained

after he had uttered his prayer to God, and soon retired to his bed. It was not to enjoy much sleep, however, for still the vision of the Man of Calvary haunted him, and with it a sense that it was in His footsteps he must tread, if the truth should really be revealed to him. In the slow hours of the night he counted the cost of the tower he should build, and wondered if he would be able to finish it. To him it was granted at the outset of the way to know something of the rugged terms of true discipleship.

. . . . . .

The next morning dawned murky and cool. A thin, struggling rain beat against the windows of Hubert's room when he woke. Things look different by the cold light of day, especially if the day be rainy, from the same things seen by gaslight. With Hubert's instant memory of the night before, came the temptation to dismiss its happenings as a dream and go back to his former way of living. But he could not do so in honesty. He had made a pledge to a supposed Being, whom he must now treat as a reality until the most honest experiment proved Him not to be, or to be inaccessible. Clearly a line of procedure formed itself in his mind. He must seek to know those laws, or principles, that governed the new realm which he sought to enter, and endeavor to adjust himself to them.

So he took from its place on the shelves the Book that was most likely of all to give the suggestions he needed, because it dealt specifically with the matter in hand. Of all those who bore witness in the Book the most remarkable one was Jesus Christ. So he turned to the New Testament, and to the Gospels. He was none too familiar with their teachings, but he believed that of them all the Gospel of John contained

the fullest statement of abstract principles. He would read it.

It was still early, and he settled himself for an hour's study. It occurred to him to invoke afresh that One whom he was seeking for light upon His own law. An impulse of pride almost deterred him, but he thought,

"If He is, and I am His creature, I can afford to be humble. Indeed, it is the only fitting thing."

So he bowed his head and said:

"O God, I am seeking Thee. Help me to understand the truth."

He found the Gospel of John, and began at the beginning. He read the sublime statements concerning the Word, and wondered if they were true. If true, it was the most wonderful fact in the world. If untrue—oh, what darkness lay in the shadow of so great light's negation! He read the twelfth verse, and the thirteenth, and pondered them in the light of the foregoing statement. If they were true, then He who was "with God," who "was God"—he paused to consider the mysterious relationship; mysterious, yet not thereby incredible; he would not repeat the folly of the gardener by too ready unbelief! If true, then God, that eternal Word, came down to man, and "as many as received Him," to them it was granted to become the sons of God! They were translated into the realm whence He came forth.

The stupendous fact—if fact?—glowed like a sunlit prism and awoke an ardent longing that it might be so. Ah, to escape the limits of this petty life! How mean and small it seemed. Man at his best, his grandest, but to live out a brief day, and then go out into the uncertain darkness forever! If God had or-

dained a way into His own infinite realm, surely it was worth the finding.

But what was it to "receive" Him? In what sense did they in the days of His fleshly life receive Him? Was it in a more physical, tangible way than would be possible to man now? Evidently not; for of those among whom He moved in bodily presence, the majority "received Him not." Certainly His mission to the earth was not for that generation only, but for all men. Perhaps the receiving was explained by the companion statement, "even to them that believe on His name."

But to "believe" was not less difficult to Hubert than to "receive." He had boasted his inability to believe that which was unsupported by evidence, and had found bitter fault with evangelical doctrine, which, he supposed, put a high premium upon blind credulity,—an attitude of mind, he contended, which would render a man as open to receive the teachings of Buddha, or Mahomet if he happened to hear them, as those of Jesus Christ. He might have added, or the teachings of a Payne, or an Ingersoll, or, as a remoter example, of the serpent in Eden who beguiled a credulous woman.

Hubert's search had become so earnest that he did not now pause to nurse his rancor against the defenseless word "believe," and it even flashed into his thought that, should he study diligently its use, he might discover in it a further or different meaning than he had credited it with. At this point he wished for a Greek Testament, but there was none in the house. Later in the day, however, he surprised a book dealer by the purchase of one, and prepared himself for further studies in the "believes" of John's Gospel.

For the present he contented himself with reading on, striving to note all the story and its argument, passing over much, undoubtedly, that would have spoken volumes had he had ears to hear, but still finding much that spoke pointedly and clearly to him. He pondered the testimony of John the Baptist to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and did not understand it. But a feeling almost of jealous envy stole into his heart toward the two disciples of the Baptist, who, hearing the witness, followed Jesus. His hungry soul echoed their "Where dwellest Thou?" in the mystical sense in which he instinctively read it, and he felt it would be joy indeed to hear that One say, "Come and see." Would he not come, indeed, if he were bidden!

Hubert read until the breakfast bell sounded, and then went down to pursue his study in Winifred's bright face, and wonder how much she really knew of the matter he was trying to search out.

"Winnie," he said to her after breakfast, "do you still think you have begun to know God?"

"Yes," she said placidly, "I am sure of it."

"How do you know?" said he. "How does He manifest Himself?"

"I don't know," she answered. "I can't explain it, but He seems very real."

"How did you find Him? What did you do?" he questioned further.

"Oh, I just came to Him," she answered. "And," as she reflected of that night's compact, "I gave myself up to Him."

So that was the way Winifred found Him. Was that the way to "believe"? But Winifred had none of his doubts about God. She believed that He was, and the mental assent led to the heart surrender. But

if he should *do* her act of faith—? If a man with doubts should give himself up would he be received? With such reflections Hubert went out into his day's work.

Again he accomplished the day's business with faithfulness to all details, but with the consciousness every hour of a perplexity unsolved—a burden unlifted. Again he was glad when the office door closed behind him and he turned his face homeward, striding beneath his umbrella through the now settled rain, with the Greek Testament grasped in his hand.

An attractive wood fire burned in the drawing-room grate that evening, but Hubert resisted its invitation and retired to his "scientific den," as Winifred called it, to pursue his new studies. He set himself to read again in the Greek that which he had read in English. He was struck by the fact that the word translated "believe" was also rendered "commit" in a passage in the second chapter. That seemed somewhat more practical to his apprehension.

He lingered long on the interview with Nicodemus, and as the rain beat upon the roof and window pane he listened to the words uttered on a Judean night, so long ago, to a man who like himself sought the truth. In the first chapter of the Gospel, in its introduction, he had caught a glimpse of infinite stretches and light unapproachable, and it seemed no marvel that a man, if he would enter that kingdom, *must be born into it!* Marvel, indeed, it might be, that such a birth were possible, but not that it was needful. For how could he transgress the boundaries of the human sphere into which he had been born, and lift himself into the higher? It was impossible. No, that life must somehow come forth to him. He must be "born from above."

As he read on into the book, still bearing in mind the character ascribed to Jesus Christ in its beginning, he could not wonder that He spoke with such authority. Not "Thus saith the Lord," but "Verily, verily, *I* say unto you," the new Prophet declared. What wonder, if He were such a Being as described, that He should offer living water to the Samaritan woman, since "in Him was life," nor that "the work of God" for obtaining eternal life should be narrowed down to a belief in—a committal unto—Himself?

As he considered these things, the emphasis shifted from "believe" to the Person in whom to believe; and it seemed to him that the teaching must be not so much that faith was in itself a way of salvation, as that it was a simple necessity to the taking of the Way—the One sent forth from God; in short, that its own value was purely relative to the One believed in. This seemed to settle a very important question, and drew the sceptic's attention away from his own capabilities of belief to the claims of the proposed object of his faith. He read His words with an interest that was painfully intense, and almost groaned his prayerful longing to know if they were true.

"After all," thought he, "be a man credulous or doubting, absolute knowledge waits upon revelation —upon demonstration."

"O God," he cried finally, "if Thou art, and if Jesus Christ is, and is such an One as described here, give me evidence! Let me know Him and Thee."

He lifted his book again, and this time he read:

"If any man is willing to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself."

If a voice had spoken aloud the words it would not have conveyed the message more directly to his heart.

He paused, as before a pivotal moment of destiny. "'Willing to do His will!'"

His face whitened. The agony of the night before was upon him. The way of the cross—the picture of the Man who like no other had done the will of God, rose before him and demanded all things.

As drowning men are said to have pass in review the events of a lifetime before them, so in a moment's time the strategic elements of his life appeared before him, and the finger of God pressed the most sensitive points in his nature. He pointed to the counting room of the keen business man, and Hubert saw himself poor for the Kingdom of God's sake. He pointed to the beautiful home and its inmates, and he saw himself homeless, having "hated" father and mother and sister—ah, sharpest pang of all!—for the sake of discipleship to the sorrowful Son of Man. An invisible attraction drew him after Him, and with ashen lips but with fixed heart Hubert Gray took up his cross.

"I am willing to do Thy will," he said. "Only let me know the teaching."

The immediate result of Hubert's work of faith cannot be written. It is incommunicable. One may point to after effects in a life transformed, but of that supernatural witness which comes to men's souls, stamping the words of God as very truth indeed, no description can be given. As jealously guarded as the crown jewels in the Tower of London is the secret of the Lord which is revealed or hidden at His will. To the foolish one who "in his heart" says, "There is no God," no glorious revelation comes; and often even the patent fact of His divine creatorship is not observed. But, given a hungry soul, he shall be filled with good things. And the Spirit waits to charge with

electric certainty the teaching of God's truth to the man who in meekness adjusts himself to it.

Cold and colorless glows the transparent prism in the shadow. But let the sun shine through it, and lo! it is alive with all the colors of glory and beauty. So the sunlight shone in the laboratory of Hubert Gray that night and lit up with many rays of refracted glory the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Light focused itself upon the Person, and Hubert saw, as years of painful study would not have taught him without that light, the mysterious merging of his own identity with His; saw mistily, what afterward he should discern more clearly, his own worthless, sinful life vanished in the dying of the One "lifted up"; saw radiantly his own triumph and everlasting life together with the living Christ. To the secret abode where lives are "hid with Christ in God," he came and saw. The unspeakable gladness of the revelation turned the rugged cross into a crown of glory.

The fragrance of a flower stole from his bedroom into the laboratory. He smiled as he recognized it.

"I have not seen the flower," he said, "but its undoubted witness is here. I do not see Thee, Jesus, my Lord and my God, but I believe Thee!—Thou art here." And he worshiped Him.

CHAPTER VI

MR. FROTHINGHAM AND THE CHOIR REHEARSAL

Unsympathetic Nature was still in tears when the next morning broke upon Hubert's new-found joy. But so ardent was it that no weather could dampen it. His first waking thoughts were of the marvelous treasure he had found. A new life stretched out before him. He was a new man. He had entered into a new world whose center of gravity was in heaven, "where Christ is," and an indescribable, exultant gladness filled his soul. He had received Him, the divine Visitant from that other world, and his own soul was quickened with the life He brought. Henceforth he claimed kinship with Him and with the Father. A new motive power of living had entered into his being. He was not conscious of prayer, but it was in his heart, making response to the revelation which had come to him, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The new realm must have its own laws of living, very contrary to those of this world, and he would know them.

First of all there was a simple, straightforward task before him and he was eager to discharge it. So after a hasty toilet he went down to the library where he rightly surmised he should find his father—also an early riser—and presented himself at the other side of the table before him.

"Eh! Good morning, Hubert," said Mr. Gray, as he looked up from his reading.

"Good morning, father," said Hubert. And he added, "I have something to tell you."

"Really? I hope there is no ill news?" Mr. Gray's first thought was of business, but a second glance at Hubert's face showed there was no unpleasant message to communicate. And there was a strange expression on his son's face. He had never seen it before—not, at least, since Hubert was a boy. No, not even then. What was it?

Hubert answered his father's questions of word and searching look.

"No, father," he said, "it is far from ill news. It is this: I am no longer a sceptic. I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Eh? What? Hubert!"

The older man's face passed in lightning changes from stages of wonder to joy, and he sprang from his chair. He grasped his son's hand across the table.

"Hubert!" he repeated, "my dear boy!"

His voice choked on the last word. A certain strain of Scottish blood forbade a warmer demonstration, but the two men's hand-clasp was eloquent. Presently Mr. Gray asked Hubert to be seated and tell him all about it, wondering much meanwhile at the change very often sighed for but seldom expected.

Hubert told his story as directly as possible, but minus many details of his heart struggle of which his reserved nature made it impossible to speak. But, bare of all embellishment, the story gave great joy to his father. His own example as a Christian had not been a brilliant one. His principles were just, as men count equity, and his life irreproachable by their standards. But the business man seemed often to hold the ascendency over the disciple of Jesus Christ, and Hubert had sometimes wondered cynically

wherein his father differed from himself except in his attendance upon outward religious forms. But the spark of life, dull and smoldering, answered to the breath of Hubert's good news of salvation, and he was unfeignedly glad.

They started together for the dining-room when the bell rang, but met Winifred in the hall. She had just come in from the garden, clad in rain-coat and cap, roses glowing in her cheeks from the keen, damp air, and a big bouquet of flame-colored flowers in her hands.

"We shall have sunshine without the sun," she cried to Hubert. "These flowers have caught his color."

"That is a parable," he answered quickly.

"Expound it please," she said.

Mr. Gray went on into the dining-room, and Hubert explained to Winifred her mystic text.

"These flowers," he said, "give indisputable evidence of the sun's existence, even though we cannot see it. They could not have their color without it. There is a sweet soul in this house who caught the beams of the Sun before I quite knew that He was, and she testified of Him, reflecting His glory when I was in great darkness. It helped me to suppose that He existed and to try to find out for myself."

Winifred looked deeply in Hubert's dark eyes and saw the hunger gone from them. He smiled on her.

"Hubert," she said, "have you found Him?"

"Yes," he said.

Her flowers fell to the floor. She threw her arms about his neck with a sob of joy.

"Oh, Hubert, I am so glad!" she cried. "I prayed—" and her voice broke.

Breakfast waited in the dining-room, but Mr. Gray

improved the time by trying to explain to his wife the great change that had come to their son. She could not understand the phenomenon, and the process that led to it was exceedingly misty, but she was glad if Hubert had come to see things differently, and hoped he would join the church at once, and the reproach of his sceptical views be wiped out forever. She felt a little nervous and excited at the announcement, and wondered just what acknowledgment of it she should make. A pink flush had stolen into her fair face by the time Hubert and Winifred entered. He walked straight across the room to where she was standing and took her soft, white hand in both his.

"Has father told you my news, mother?" he asked.

"Yes, dear Hubert," she said, and kissed him. "I am very glad. It has been a grief—" and she hesitated. She thought to say, "that you have not been with us," but he finished the sentence for her.

"That I have not been a Christian? I know it must have been. Forgive me for all the pain it has given you. I have been wrong and blind."

The maid peered in, and Mrs. Gray was glad of the interruption and to propose that they sit down at once. She was glad of breakfast, too. She saw no reason why the coffee should spoil, even though the son and heir of the house had just now come into an inheritance exceeding the most fabulous fortunes of earth.

The blessing was asked less formally than usual, and Mr. Gray thanked the Lord also for the Bread of Life which had visited them. Later in the course of conversation he remarked:

"By the way, you will all be interested to hear that Mr. Bond, who preached for us last Sunday, is to give a series of Bible Lectures in the Y. M. C. A. Hall,

beginning in about a fortnight. Mr. Selton is bringing it about. It was through him that we had the privilege of hearing Mr. Bond last Sunday."

"Then it was not upon Doctor Schoolman's invitation?" queried Hubert.

"Oh, he invited him, of course, but it was at Mr. Selton's wish. He is very influential, you know. He heard Mr. Bond when he was in New York last winter and was much interested in his teaching. So he suggested having him here for a Sunday, and himself undertook the expense."

Fortunately for this instance Mr. Selton possessed the two qualifications, so often united in church life, of influence and wealth.

"Later," went on Mr. Gray, "he spoke with several men, including myself, about the advisability of the Bible Lectures, having secured Mr. Bond's consent before he left on Monday. We saw no objection. I think, myself, that we need a little stirring up now and then."

"And the lectures are to be in the Y. M. C. A. Hall?" asked Hubert, with interest.

"Yes, that is a central point, and we wish to make them union meetings."

"I am very glad to hear about it," said Hubert.

The rainy day passed, its somberness meanwhile lightened by a greater glow than that of Winifred's flame-colored flowers, and Friday came, radiant with sunshine. It was passed without special incident until evening, which was the time of the weekly choir rehearsal. Then Mr. George Frothingham called, as had become his wont, to escort Winifred to the church. That had once been Hubert's task, and bitterly he had resented it when gradually the change came

about. Now he need have no fear, for his sister was not going. She had not seen Frothingham since Sunday, and during the day had looked forward with a little unpleasant dread to the interview that must be. She imagined various ways in which she should break to him the news that she had left the choir, but none seemed satisfactory. All her little speeches left her as the time drew near.

He found her at the piano, where improvised melodies had been working off her nervous apprehension.

"Not ready?" he asked, after the usual salutations.

"I am not going."

"Really? You are not ill, I hope?"

"Oh, no! I never was better," confessed Winifred.

"You should go above all things to-night," he said. "Mr. Mercer is going to give us parts of the Redemption."

The music was certainly alluring.

"I have left the choir," said Winifred faintly.

Mr. Frothingham never lost his easy self-poise over anything which this jestingly tolerated world offered him, but he allowed himself to be surprised now.

"You are surely not in earnest?" he said. "You of all persons! I thought you were devoted to the choir. You are not going to desert us for some other field of conquest?"

"Oh, no!" said Winifred.

"Have you quarreled with Mercer?" he persisted. "He *is* cranky sometimes. Shall I fight him?"

Winifred had to laugh at the thought of the handsome, immaculate young man before her in a pugilistic encounter with Mr. Mercer.

"No, you needn't do that," she said; and added, "you would get the worst of it, I think."

"Oh, really! Thanks very much! Perhaps you do not know my prowess in those lines? But on the whole I should prefer a smaller man than Mercer. He shall be spared if you say so."

"You relieve me," said Winifred, laughing.

But how was she to explain the truth to Frothingham? It was easier to jest with him than to speak earnestly, and Winifred had an instinctive feeling, not definitely acknowledged, that to make him understand a spiritual idea would be impossible.

"But really, Winifred," he went on, "if it is not rude to ask, I should like to know what great reason makes you desert us now in the very height of your success, and, I should think, enjoyment?"

Smiles left her face, and a flush of embarrassment deepened in her cheeks. It was very hard to speak to him of these things—harder than it had been to any other.

"That is just it," she said slowly. "It has been a success for me, artistically, and a great enjoyment. But there has been nothing in it for—for—*Christ.*" She hesitated before the sacred name. Why was it so hard to speak it before him?

He was silent. They were already by the simple mention of that name in deeper water, conversationally, than he was accustomed to. She had to go on.

"I have been convinced," she said, "that it has all been very wrong. I have been offering to God a pretended worship, when it has really been the worship of our Art. That must be idolatry, I think. I can't go on with it."

Winifred stopped decisively, and Frothingham found words to reply with just a tinge of irony:

"I am afraid you are a bit too metaphysical for me, Winifred. I don't quite understand you. Do

you mean to say singing in the choir is wrong? If it is, it is a pretty common sin and quite generally approved of."

"No, it isn't wrong," said Winifred desperately; "at least, it would be the loveliest thing in the world, I think, if we were all *true worshipers,* and meant what we sang, and sang to God. But you know it hasn't been anything of the sort. We have sung for our own pleasure and the applause of the people."

"And the money, some of us," asserted Frothingham with indifferent candor. "But I don't see why we should be troubled about it. It's a part of the machine. It goes to make up the church worship, and a considerable part of it. I suppose they offer it to the Lord—or whatever you call it—whether we individual performers mean anything or not."

Winifred thought of the prayer-wheels. Did the church turn the machine and grind out praises by proxy? How much merit did they accumulate thereby in the eyes of God who is a Spirit, and would be worshiped "in spirit and in truth"? It was very perplexing. She could not argue it all out with him, but she said:

"If the individual worshipers are insincere, I should think the total result" (she had a little of her father's business logic) "would be insincerity."

He smiled at her reasoning. "Let the clergy thrash that out," he said. "When they or the church find fault it will be time enough for my conscience to twinge."

"I think one of the clergy did find fault in the sermon Sunday morning," ventured Winifred.

"Oh, that young fellow?" said Frothingham carelessly. "I didn't find out what he was getting at. Doctor Schoolman always looks beatific when we sing.

While he continues to beam I shall still consider that singing in the choir is about the most pious act I do."

Mr. Frothingham was rather vain of the brevity of his list of pious deeds.

"Oh, come on, Winifred," he continued, grasping her hand coaxingly, "don't bother your head about such mystical things. Come on and sing. Think of the Redemption."

She did think of it, and tears struggled to come with the thought.

"I am not going," she said, without looking in his eyes. "Don't ask me, George."

"And you have no pity on poor me, going without you?"

"No," she answered, smiling. "You will survive it."

"Cruel lady!" he said dramatically, and bore her slender fingers to his lips.

She withdrew her hand with a slight flush, and he bethought him to look at his watch.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "it's late. Mercer will think he has lost me, too."

He made hasty adieux and was off, his light, swinging step sounding pleasantly down the walk.

Winifred stood where he had left her, with a conflict of emotions in her heart. She still felt the tingle of his lips upon her hand, and still smiled at the airy nothings he said. But there was pain in the compound of her thoughts; pain at a difference between them that proclaimed its power to grow wider; pain at defeat in making a principle understood and appreciated; pain most of all from the subtle sense of something pure and sweet now sullied, as though too rude a breath had blown upon a sensitive flower, or as though pearls had been ignorantly trodden upon.

Meanwhile Frothingham, on his way to the handsome church, indulged in characteristic meditations of his own regarding Winifred's strange freak. He heartily hoped she would get over it. It was a stupid turn for affairs to take as regarded himself; for perpetual meetings at the choir, with the pleasant walks attached, and frequent private rehearsals in the Gray drawing-room had furnished admirable facilities for the courtship of whose issue he had not a doubt. But it was far from a misfortune that could not be mended. He should miss her immensely, of course, but there were other pleasant people in the choir and he held an easy popularity among them. Then he was too well ingratiated in her favor and as a frequent guest at her house to be displaced by this matter. He should still do the attentive in every available way. But he hoped she was not getting fanatical. It would be inexpressibly stupid to have a wife over pious, with extreme views about things. He should like her to be religious up to a certain point. He thought women ought to be that. It was a good thing to have somebody in a house who knew something about those things in case of trouble. Mr. Frothingham was himself in the insurance business—at the head of a prominent company's office for that city—and he was accustomed to take business-like account of life risks, and to recognize death as a hard factor to be dealt with. Just now he unconsciously erected a kind of spiritual lightning rod against his future house in the piety of its expected mistress. But he hoped she would not get too religious—not enough so to interfere with the life of gayety which he expected to continue for many a year. But it did not occur to him to relinquish her even if she should begin to show symptoms of extreme views. He was rather fond of

Winifred—quite so, in fact; and he was not indifferent to "the old man's ducats," as he had confided to himself and to one or two most intimate friends. On the whole he congratulated himself on pleasant prospects ahead, and was not too much disconcerted by his own appearance alone at the rehearsal.

Winifred spent the evening rather ill at ease. Its pleasant habit was broken up. Had she been foolish? Was she not taking an unheard-of stand? Would it have been better to go along and conform her course to the popular conscience instead of her own, perhaps very silly, one? She should be laughed at, and it was miserable to be laughed at or thought eccentric. She tried to play the piano, but imagined strains from the Redemption interrupted her. She went to talk with her mother, but found her seated beside the library table with her embroidery while her father read aloud.

Mrs. Gray managed to utter an aside:

"I had forgotten, child, that you were not going to the rehearsal. How strange it seems!"

Winifred drifted away again, unable to listen to what her father was reading. Hubert was nowhere to be found. She went at last to her own room and did the best thing possible. She poured out her heart before God, telling Him with the simplicity that had characterized her first coming to Him her perplexity and unhappiness.

"I am miserable," she said to Him. "I don't know whether I have done right or not, and I miss the music so much. Please let me know if it is right to give it up? I do wish to worship Thee."

No flood of revelation poured at once upon her, but she took her Bible and read. She had learned no

method of study, but read where she chanced to open. The portion did not say anything about choirs or rehearsals, but it led her mind away and soothed her. And its atmosphere was so pure and fragrant that when the debated thing rose again it was instantly judged by contrast. Very different was the spiritual air of her choir experience, as in imagination she stepped back into it; and the fellowship of George Frothingham, Mr. Mercer, and the drink-sodden organist, did not seem like the communion of the saints as she found it in the Acts of the Apostles.

With the vanishing of her doubts as to the wisdom of her course came back the gentle peace that she had known for five blessed days, and its price was above all musical delights.

CHAPTER VII

A NEW SUNDAY

SUNDAY morning found four people seated in the comfortable pew which the iron merchant was able to pay for. And, by the way, what a comfortable thing is wealth in the various ramifications of life, even to one's church relationships! No fear of the unwelcome bidding, "Sit thou here under my footstool"—in the undesirable front seats where one's neck must be craned backward to admit of seeing the minister; nor of being relegated to the back pews when ears have become a little dull with age. How thankful should one be whose lot in life is thus favorably cast! But we have not admitted to our consciousness a thankfulness that the Epistle of James is not often read; or, if read, too literally dwelt upon. We have found a grateful oil to pour upon any rising waters of ill conscience in reflecting upon the beneficent adjustment of social relationships by a wise Providence and the divine right of money-kings.

Mrs. Gray and her neighbor, Mrs. Butterworth, exchanged serene glances of recognition across the shallow partition that separated them, but the latter added a look of inquiry as it was observed that Winifred was with her family. Mrs. Gray's heart sank at the thought of having to explain the phenomenon when once the service should be over. Winifred felt that many eyes must note her presence there instead of in the choir, and the embarrassment of the thought almost dissipated the spirit of true worship for which

she had longed and prayed. But she had soon forgotten to a considerable degree the people about her, and gave herself diligently to the service. It was not altogether without self-consciousness, however, that she joined in the hymns, fearing lest her own voice should be heard above others. Mrs. Gray, too, wished that she would not sing quite so loudly, lest it should destroy the convenient fiction of the laryngitis.

Hubert realized that he took his place in the congregation on an entirely new basis this day, and he endeavored earnestly to put away all spirit of his former prejudice and to receive in meekness anything which his Lord might say to him from His place in the midst. He tried to forget how utterly hollow and meaningless the formalities of the service had heretofore seemed to him, and to discern, if possible, within the mold of man's fashioning the operation of the Spirit of God. With his own heart at peace with God and charged with His joy, it was easy to look upon all about him more kindly, with an eye as critical to find good and honor it as to discover evil. Upon even his long-time aversion, Doctor Schoolman, he looked with expectancy, for had he not, after all, known for these many years Him whom he—Hubert—had but just "begun to know," as Winifred would put it? With ears now open, should he not hear much which would cause his heart to burn within him?

Hubert and Winifred shared the same hymn-book, and together sang with deep gladness hymns which ascribe praises to Christ. But, intent upon truthfulness, Winifred paused before sentiments not understood, or the profession of experiences quite unfelt, and let the congregation sing on without her. The privilege of doing so gave her keen satisfaction, even

though it was difficult to stop in the midst of a pleasant melody.

"Better a break in the melody than in sincerity," she said to herself, "since the Lord is here and taking note of everything."

The thought of His presence was very sweet; not at all the vision of terror which it had seemed to her a week ago. She found the fear of Him not incompatible with the purest confidence and love.

The choir rendered their accustomed service, and a new soprano, on trial, exploited her skill in solo parts. She sang without Winifred's refinement of artistic sense, but sang fashionably. She sang dramatically, and cast languishing glances at the unresponsive backs of the congregation, blinking over her notes as though invisible footlights dazzled her eyes. It was not easy to find the sentiment sung in the midst of the quavering notes, so the poor worshipers below could scarcely offer "amens" in their hearts; but they might perhaps consider thankfully that some sort of noise, "joyful" or otherwise, had been made unto the Lord by their paid proxy.

Doctor Schoolman's sermon was a typical one. Finished and elegant, his polished sentences reached his congregation gently; not like swift arrows from a tense bow, but rather like harmless darts taken from the preacher's quiver and laid without violence against the hearts of his listeners. Very good arrows they often were from the philosophic standpoint, but seldom fashioned from the rugged essential truths of the doctrine of Christ.

He had a text from Scripture certainly. But no slavish adherence to its evident meaning, as seen by its setting, hampered the orator in his thought. Indeed, was it not a kindness to the old Book that still

somewhat from its pages was thought worthy to act as a peg upon which to hang the ripe and cultivated ideas of the twentieth century?

Hubert did not find his soul much fed by the discourse, but, keen and discriminating as his mind might be, he was not yet a Bible student and able to disentangle the original thoughts of the preacher from the teachings of revelation. He found much to assent to ethically, but, compared with the revelation in his laboratory when the pure light of heaven shone upon the pages of John's Gospel, the rhetorical utterances of Doctor Schoolman were as water unto wine. They were not so commanding but that he at last found time to glance at his neighbors to see how they were taking the sermon. Winifred was too near him to be looked at, likewise his father; but he could see his mother. Very elegant, very composed, very approving she looked. A calm contentment beamed upon her mobile face, and Hubert could not help it that his sharp eye, formed to detect minutiæ, printed upon his mind even the details of the picture she made, sitting so quietly there. Soft, lustrous, black silk became well the figure which a life of gentle inactivity caused to incline to corpulence, while a modest show of exquisite lace relieved its somberness. There was just a tiny glitter of costly gems, not too vulgarly showy for church, and the most suitable of bonnets crowned the graceful head, whose waves of soft brown hair still repudiated silver.

The minister's text led him to heaven at this point, and he drew it in sentimental lines; a place whose essential light was not so much the Lamb as other things; a place of reunited friends, of congenial occupations, of tastes gratified, and of knowledge ever widening. He offered no uncomfortable suggestion

that any of his hearers might fail of entering there.

Hubert saw among his hearers abstracted faces not a few; interested, studious faces; and hungry faces which looked their longing for meat not found as yet in the Lord's house. Among the last class he noticed in one of the front pews a man, evidently an artisan, whose deep, large eyes looked yearningly toward the pulpit with an appeal for bread, while from it there came, through fine and learned discourse, to his untutored mind a stone. His face smote Hubert with a sudden pity, and a hunger crept into his own heart, not alone to know Christ, but to make Him known. He wondered if this man had ever seen Him as he had. Oh, if he could only tell him of Him, and turn the misery of those longing eyes into joy!

The sermon ended. It was never very long; for Doctor Schoolman well knew that patience, that sits good-naturedly for hours at games or races, or in the seats of a packed theater, has very short limits at church. He never taxed it, nor himself, too far. So the closing hymn was punctually sung, and the benediction was pronounced in tender tones upon the congregation.

Mrs. Butterworth's curiosity blossomed afresh when the meeting was over and she had the opportunity of speaking with Winifred and her mother. She addressed herself to the former, to Mrs. Gray's mingled relief and terror; relief that she herself was not called upon to find excuses, and terror lest Winifred should make herself ridiculous.

"You were not in the choir this morning?" she said with a "why" in her voice.

"No," said Winifred, "I have left the choir."

"Really!" exclaimed Mrs. Butterworth in a shocked voice. "I hope not for good?"

"Yes—I think it is for good," Winifred confessed.

"Oh, please do not say so!" cried Mrs. Butterworth, but in a suppressed voice, for they had not yet left the church. "What shall we do? We have enjoyed your singing so very much!"

"I am afraid I have been too conscious of that fact," said Winifred frankly, while her mother looked alarmed. "I think I shall be able to worship God more sincerely in the congregation."

Mrs. Gray felt that the worst had come, now that Winifred had declared her position. She almost turned faint as she heard her speak to Mrs. Butterworth so simply and directly of worshiping God. To be sure they were still in the building supposably dedicated to that end, but to speak aloud of it in so many words seemed very bad form. Her daughter might *sing* protests of adoration in the ears of the whole congregation, with the loudest of affected fervor, and she found no fault with it. But the comfort of that was that nobody believed she meant it!

Mrs. Butterworth looked at Winifred keenly, and partially grasped her meaning.

"Oh, I hope you'll not look at it that way," she said half soothingly. "It might suit your own feelings better, but what about ours? I have often said," and her eyebrows arched plaintively, "that your singing did me more good than the sermon!"

Winifred looked at the worldly, fashionable woman and wondered, not at all cynically, how much good her combined efforts with Doctor Schoolman's had done toward a life-transformation.

"I am sorry not to sing," she said sympathetically, "since you enjoyed it so much. I would gladly continue if I could. I cannot. But there is already someone in my place—"

Mrs. Butterworth lifted her hand in silent protest. She looked at Winifred reproachfully, and settled her lips as one who should say nothing of the new singer in contrast with her favorite. She shook her head resignedly, and at this moment they were joined by someone else who proffered greetings. Winifred was glad to join Hubert and to slip out as quickly as possible, they both as usual preferring the walk home to the carriage. Frothingham saw them from afar, and inwardly commented upon Hubert's unwonted appearance at church for two consecutive Sundays, and his own consequent loss. He had no mind to join Winifred with Hubert for a third.

The two exchanged views of the sermon on the way home. It seemed very strange to hear Hubert speak of it sympathetically. He mentioned some admirable points which he found in the minister's reasoning, and refrained from saying that the change of heart he had himself experienced had not made less hateful to him Doctor Schoolman's affected style.

"How did *you* like the sermon?" he asked Winifred when he had expressed his own opinion.

"Oh, I don't know," said Winifred hesitatingly. "He said some lovely things. That illustration from Greek mythology was beautiful. I am sure I shall remember that. But I wish," she added innocently, "that he had said more about the Lord."

"So do I," said Hubert decidedly.

They walked on in silence for awhile and then Hubert spoke.

"I am not a qualified judge of sermons," he said, "but I would a hundred times rather read the Gospel of John."

"Are you still reading it?" said Winifred.

"Yes."

"I wish we might read it together," she said wistfully.

"We might," he said. "Shall we begin to-day?"

"By all means. But I can't read Greek," she added doubtfully. She had observed the Greek Testament with its fresh markings.

He laughed. "But fortunately I can read English," he said. And so it was arranged.

CHAPTER VIII

"NOT OF THE WORLD"

THAT afternoon found Hubert and Winifred with their books, looking about for the most suitable place to read. Somnolent sounds from the couch in the library warned them not to locate there. They decided on a cool window-seat in the drawing-room overlooking the garden. There they settled themselves and found their places. It was decided to begin at the point Hubert had reached, which was the seventeenth chapter. Before beginning to read Hubert shaded his eyes with his hand for a moment to ask, as had become his wont since he first sought to know God, for light upon the Word. Winifred understood the act and joined him silently.

He began reading reverently and slowly. The simple, stately words fell very sweetly upon their ears. They paused often, so as to understand more fully what they read. They read with the intent earnestness of those who explore new territory, and who have immense interests in things discovered. They lingered first over the second verse:

"As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given him."

"'As many as thou hast given him,'" repeated Winifred. "What do you think that means, Hubert?"

Hubert gazed into vacancy meditatively. "I don't know," he announced, very slowly; "there is a pro-

found mystery here which I have seen in earlier chapters. I do not see the point of meeting between two laws that seem almost contradictory. But one point seems very clear, and it meets us very simply on our human side: that is, that the one who 'is willing to do His will' is the one whom the Father 'gives' to Jesus Christ."

"It is very sweet," said Winifred, "to think of being given by the Father to Him. It seems surer, somehow, than to just give oneself."

Hubert's deep eyes kindled and glowed with a liquid fire. "Yes," he said in a suppressed voice, "it is wonderful." He was standing on ground that had not by long habit grown coldly theological, but was instinct with life to him through a new and vital experience.

They read on:

"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

They paused to meditate, and Winifred was the first to break the silence.

"Hubert," she said in a low voice, "it must be we have entered upon eternal life. We have begun to know Him."

Her voice sank upon the last word, and her lips trembled. Instinctively she held out her hand to her brother, and he clasped it in his. Tears streamed down upon her book, and Hubert was not ashamed that his own eyes were moist. They were silent for some moments, while the young man beheld afresh that eternal, infinite realm out of which the Word had come forth, and he knew himself born into it. Earth seemed illusory—but the scene of a moment—in the glory of that vision.

They read on and Hubert explained to his sister what he saw in the request of the Lord Jesus to be given again the glory which He had with the Father "before the world was." Never in his reading of the Gospel had he lost sight of its beginning, and he read these words, as he had others, in its light. He turned back and read the opening verses of the first chapter to Winifred in explanation of the glory to be given back, and the very fact of its being asked for, as though having been surrendered for the time, shed a light upon passages poorly understood before, which had shown clearly His humanity and His subjection to the Father.

Again they read on, pondering as they read, but paused over the ninth verse:

"'I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine.'"

"Do you think that means, Hubert," said Winifred, "that He does not pray for the world? It seems very exclusive. But we know that God loves the world?"

"I think," said Hubert, "that the discrimination is not *against* the world, but rather *for* those given Him out of it. He must care specially for them. Perhaps if we read on we shall see the special character of this prayer for us."

The words "for us" slipped out very naturally, and he did not recall them, so sweet and sure was the confidence of having been given into the hands of Jesus Christ.

So they read on, and noted the petitions of the priestly prayer for His own. They did not sound the depths of meaning in them, for they were yet but babes; but they observed the strong line of enclosure

which separated them from the world and the Lord's reiterated statement that they were not of it, even as He.

"It is very strange," remarked Winifred to Hubert, "that Doctor Schoolman has never told us about this." But she amended quickly, "Perhaps he has many times and I have not listened. But I have always thought we were all very much alike, only that some people were better than others; never that there was such a sharp line drawn between those who are given to Christ and the rest of the world."

"I do not think we have heard much about it," said Hubert. "I have not been much of a churchgoer, but I think for the most part we have been talked to as though we were all on the same plane as regards relationship to God and Jesus Christ."

"But this line is so very exclusive," said Winifred almost regretfully.

"So very *inclusive,* you mean," said Hubert, smiling.

"An inclusive line must be exclusive also, must it not?" she persisted.

"I suppose it must," he admitted. "The same walls that shut us in this house shut everybody else out. But there is a way in," he added, intent upon the doctrine of God's free grace found true by his own experiment.

"Yes," said Winifred, " 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.' That gave me great comfort when I read it, Hubert. But I was thinking now that if I had not come to know that I was outside, I should never have come inside."

They finished the chapter, dwelling upon the words:

"Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast

given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

Their hearts burned at the love that longed for them to be with Him and to see His glory. And they should see it! The distant scene glowed with reality and seemed near. There was One with them whom they did not see, One who still draws near when loved disciples commune concerning Him, and it was He who made the Scriptures an open, radiant page. Very pure and fragrant was the spiritual air they breathed then, and it prepared them to judge of baser atmosphere. "Sanctify them through Thy truth," the Lord Jesus had asked, and as they pondered the Word of Truth the answer to His prayer began.

When they finished their reading Winifred surprised Hubert by what seemed an irrelevant remark.

"I do not think I shall go to Mrs. Butterworth's party, Hubert," she said.

Her brother had no need to add, "Nor shall I," for he was not a society man. But he looked at her inquiringly.

"I don't know why," she replied to his look, "but it seems very different from this. Don't you think so?"

"I do indeed," he answered, understanding what she meant by "this."

Winifred had not arrived at analytical reasons, but had intuitively reached a conclusion. Just a mental picture of the coming brilliant event at Mrs. Butterworth's; the gay scene, the intoxicating music, the hollow courtesies, flattering words and glances, the dancing—just an instant vision of the scene that arose in sheer contrast against the pure holiness of

the things they had been considering, and Winifred turned from it quickly. To have spoken her impression, and Hubert's evident approval, helped her to hold to it in later hours of temptation.

The Japanese gong sounded musically for Sunday evening tea before they were aware that time had flown. They assembled with their elders who looked not so much refreshed by their slumbers as our young friends by their study. The repast over, Hubert, who wished to do all things required of a Christian, but who felt a secret repugnance to listening again to Doctor Schoolman, sounded Winifred's mind on the matter.

"Are you going to hear Doctor Schoolman?" he asked.

"Why, I suppose so," said she. "What else should one do?"

"What is he going to preach about?" he asked evasively.

"I don't know. Let's look in the paper and see."

So they found Saturday's paper and saw that this evening was to have the first of a series of discourses on "Poets and Their Teachings," with Tennyson as the first subject.

"I am not hungering for a literary lecture," said Hubert. "I should like to hear something clearly about Christ."

"We might go somewhere else," said Winifred, giving the suggestion which he wished.

They looked at the paper again to see the advertised subjects at various churches. They found some sensational, that might bear reference to the Lord or might not; some very promising, but at churches too far away; and finally they decided upon a little church in

a street near them, whose modest announcement told simply of "preaching at 7:30."

It was with something of a spirit of adventure and an almost troubled conscience that Winifred deserted her usual place of attendance. They turned down a less fashionable street than their own and came to the church, a small brick structure, very fresh and new looking. A few young people still lingered about the door, loath to go in from the summer twilight. Within the newness rivaled that without. The pew backs shone with varnish, and the aisles glowed with fresh, red carpet. The simple pulpit was carefully polished and a bright bookmark hung from the gilt-edged leaves of the Bible. The choir occupied a platform at the right of the minister, facing the congregation, and each member held the visitors in view as they were shown to a seat. The evening congregation was scattering, so their advent was the more noticeable. They were early also, which gave the young girl organist some time to look at them fixedly across the back of the cabinet organ at which she was seated, before beginning her voluntary. Then she played "Alice, Where Art Thou?" with loud and ill-assorted stops. Had Winifred been less bent on sincere worship, or their quest for Christ-preaching been less serious, she would have found it difficult to keep from laughing with the sudden sense of humor which assailed her.

The service was nearly as elaborate as the statelier neighbor-church could boast. The choir rendered an anthem in process of time, and Winifred studied their faces earnestly, wondering if any thought of reality was in their hearts as they sang. They were nearly all young, with thoughtless, unspiritual faces, but they sang the sentiments of discipline and sorrow.

There was no artistic value in their singing, and Winifred thought with a sigh, "It does not help any that the music should be poor. They have no more heart in it than had we with our trained skill."

The minister was a man of moderate abilities and somewhat ungraceful appearance. He was tall, sandy-haired, with a half-anxious countenance, as though the cares of the shining new edifice and of the flock rather troubled him. He preached with no striking originality, but with evident earnestness, mingled with abortive efforts at rhetoric. He spoke good words for Christ, extolling His power to save sinners; and the simple statements, however trite they may have sounded to others, were music in the eager ears of those who had just come to know Him.

At the close of the meeting he made his way to the door to shake hands with the departing hearers, and Hubert gave him his with a cordial grasp, and with thanks for his "excellent sermon." The minister's face brightened and he looked after his appreciative visitors with hope that they might come again.

CHAPTER IX

"TWO OF ME"

AFFAIRS moved quietly in the Gray household as the week advanced. Mr. Frothingham called one evening and made himself very entertaining to the two ladies. Mrs. Gray laughed gently at his jokes, for he was a tireless jester (sometimes a tiresome one), and he enjoyed seeing the serious light in Winifred's eyes change to mirth under his curious speeches.

The two sang together, and after that she played dreamy snatches from Beethoven while he leaned back in an easy chair and listened. What a harmonious and pleasant life stretched before the two together! Mrs. Gray lived over again through her daughter's heart days when Robert Gray and she were learning that life was sweetest when they were together, and she sighed in a pensive mingling of emotions as she mentally gave Winifred up to the reign of the ancient conqueror. She fell asleep over the fleecy shawl she was knitting as her daughter played, and was not aroused when Mr. Frothingham rose to go. Winifred and he exchanged smiling glances as they saw her closed eyes, and spoke in low tones together. Mr. Frothingham lingered just a perceptible moment over Winifred's hand in parting, and looked down into her face with an unspoken question she had never read before so clearly. Her eyes fell, and the flush in her fair face deepened into lovelier red.

"Good night," each said softly, and he went away.

Winifred drank in the luxury of her own sweet thoughts until his step ceased to sound, and then went over to her mother's chair. She stooped and kissed her forehead. Mrs. Gray opened her eyes.

"Dear me! I lost myself for a moment," she said. Then, "Is George gone?" she added.

"Yes, mother."

Mrs. Gray looked at the clock. "And it's time," she said with parental duty. "You must go to bed at once, dear."

Winifred had had a happy evening, and the reflection that looked back at her from the glass in her dressing-room was radiant. But, after all, in the depths of her heart there was a tinge of something sad, an unsatisfied sense of some good thing wanting. What was it that the evening lacked? A little book upon the table suggested the answer with a mute reproach. In all the evening's pleasure there had been no sweet savor of Jesus Christ. Now as she took the book and tried to read her heart beat coldly toward Him. The words did not speak to her, but seemed like misty voices far away, spoken for other ears. The tide of another love had come sweeping in, strong and insistent. George Frothingham's face smiled before her, and instead of the words she was reading she heard his voice as they sang together:

> "I would that my love could silently
> Flow in a single word."

She looked away from the book and gave herself to dreaming until the little clock reminded her of the hour. Then she roused from her reverie.

"It is too late," she thought. "I will not try to read now. In the morning I will make up for it."

She knelt beside the bed for her customary even-

ing prayer, and found herself "saying" it as in former days. She stopped abruptly.

"Forgive me, Lord," she said, "I did not think what I was saying."

Then a feeling of remorse, of real unhappiness, seized her. Where was the true worship she had coveted and found? It had flown like a bird from her windows. In distress she prayed:

"O Lord, I have missed Thee! I cannot see Thy face, I do not hear Thee. Do not let me lose Thee!"

Her wandering thoughts came back to the supreme need. She was not versed in the theology of any school, and could not have stated her case to suit any. But her sensitive soul barometer registered danger in the atmosphere, and she had no rest until it changed. Being blessed with the grace of honesty—with "truth in the inward parts"—she poured out her heart before God, and found much relief in so doing. The whole subject did not clear at once. A process was required for that. But a simple understanding with her Lord that He was to be first at any cost was re-affirmed, and it gave rest. With the restored sense of His fellowship she slept.

Morning dawned with the sweet twittering of birds, the breath of syringas and roses, and a faultless sky. It was a joy to live.

Hubert was out for an early ride, and his black horse Sahib's satin coat shone brightly in the morning sunlight. He took the shortest way out of the city and was soon cantering gently down the country road beside a singing brook, filling his eyes with the beauty everywhere, worshiping its Maker, and wondering how he might best serve Him.

Winifred sang morning psalms to the Lord, with a corresponding melody in her heart. But sometimes

the shadow of a question fell athwart the prospect that seemed so shining. It was about Mrs. Butterworth's party. Sunday it had seemed very clear that she should not go, but since, with the seventeenth of John not so fresh in her mind, the matter seemed not so settled. How should she excuse herself at this late day? What would Mrs. Butterworth think? More than that, what would her mother think? Would she not be much annoyed? There was another factor, too. When George Frothingham was there last evening she was so glad the party was not mentioned. How could she have told him she was not going? And when she thought of him she wished to go. He would be there, looking especially handsome in most careful evening dress. She could almost hear the strains of Werner's orchestra as she imagined herself floating over the polished floor with the best of dancers. There was still another factor. Hanging in her wardrobe, sheathed carefully in a protecting sheet, was the loveliest of white dresses. It had been worn but once, and that in another town. Both her mother and she agreed that it was the very thing for Mrs. Butterworth's party. What a pity not to wear it! And if staying away from Mrs. Butterworth's were a precedent to be followed, where should she ever wear it? A very small reason this, say you. But you are mistaken. Deeply intrenched in the feminine heart is the desire to be beautiful, and though "holy women" since the days of old have learned the supreme excellence of the inward adornment over the outward, the latter is slow to lose its appeal. Not yet, at least, had Winifred become indifferent to it.

This morning before descending the stairs she was

beguiled into taking down the dress, just to look at it, spreading it out in fleecy, shining folds upon the bed. How beautiful it was! She had not learned for her soul's comfort that the wise man's counsel is very profound when he instructs, "*Look* not upon the wine when it is red"! Even in the daylight tiny brilliants flashed out from their setting in foamy lace about the neck. Well Winifred knew what a radiant picture would stand within her mirror-frame when the dress should be donned, and eyes bright with excited anticipation should rival the glow of diamonds. If she went, she should wear the slender gold necklace with its single pendant of diamonds which her father had given her. But she was not going—and for what an intangible reason!

Hubert had returned from his ride, and Winifred met him in the upper hall and confided to him her perplexity.

"I feel as though there were two of me instead of one," she said. "One of us would like to go to Mrs. Butterworth's party."

"And the other one?" asked Hubert.

"Decided last Sunday not to go," she answered.

"Which one do you think is on the Lord's side?" he queried.

"The one that says not to go," she replied without hesitation.

"I should stand by that one if I were you," he advised.

"I will," she said, and slipped her hand in his as they went down the stairs.

At the breakfast table the dreaded discussion was precipitated. Mrs. Gray addressed her daughter.

"Winifred, dear," she said, "have you looked at your new white dress to see if it requires anything

to be done before Mrs. Butterworth's party? Did we not think the girdle should be altered slightly?"

"I was looking at it this morning, mother," faltered Winifred, and Hubert shot a sympathetic glance across the table.

"Will it need altering, do you think?"

"N—no," she hesitated, "I think it is all right." Then she girded the loins of her intention and added: "But I think, mother, if you do not mind, I should prefer not to go to Mrs. Butterworth's party."

"Why, Winifred!" exclaimed her mother in surprise. "What can you be thinking of? The invitations were accepted long ago. You are not ill, certainly?"

"Oh, no!" said Winifred. "But I think I can excuse myself to Mrs. Butterworth so that she will not be offended. My chief regret will be if it disappoints you, mother."

"But what can be your reasons?" said Mrs. Gray. "They must be very good if you would decline the invitation at this late day. It will be very rude unless you are positively hindered."

"I know it," said Winifred humbly. "But the reasons seem very strong to me."

She was of a sympathetic nature, and it was easy to look at things through another's eyes. She saw the case clearly from her mother's standpoint, and it was difficult to muster her own defense. But she prayed inwardly that the One she sought to please would come to her aid, and He did. It was no small help, also, that Hubert, strong-minded and firm as a rock, was on her side. She went on bravely, but in a low voice and with downcast eyes:

"You know I have begun to try to worship God, mother; and to know Him just a little is the sweet-

est thing I ever knew. Hubert and I were reading the Bible together Sunday''—she glanced across at him appealingly, and his face encouraged her—''and we read some of the words of Jesus to His Father. He said that we—that is, those who were given to Him—were 'not of the world,' just as He is not. It impressed me very much. I could not help seeing Mrs. Butterworth's party, and it seemed to me like 'the world,' and that perhaps I did not belong there. It seemed so very, very different from what we were reading, that I thought I never could go again to such a place. I shall be very glad, if you don't mind it too much, mother, if I may stay at home?''

She stopped and waited for her answer. There was silence for a moment, and then Mrs. Gray, who had passed through various stages of apprehension and distress as her daughter spoke, replied as calmly as possible:

''I am sure I ought to be very glad, Winifred, to have you religiously inclined. But I should be extremely sorry to have you get any fanatical ideas. I never thought you were given to eccentric things, and I hope you will not become so. It seems to me that you and Hubert''—she hesitated to include her son in the remark, but ventured it—''are rather young Christians to decide such things for yourselves in such an extraordinary way. You should look at older persons. I suppose I am not an example''—and her tone was just a trifle icy for such a gentle lady—''but Mrs. Schoolman will be there with her daughters, and so will many of the most prominent members of our church. I really cannot approve of such an extraordinary idea!—extraordinary!'' and she repeated the word which usually indicated the high water mark of her well-bred disapproval.

Winifred looked silently at her plate, and Mrs. Gray spoke again, looking at her husband.

"I wish, father," she said, "that you would try and set Winifred right on this matter. We cannot let her go on in such a mistake. Where will it lead to?" and with real distress she considered the calamity of her beautiful daughter's withdrawal from society, and the dashing her own fond pride to the ground.

Mr. Gray had been listening thoughtfully. Now, being appealed to, he spoke.

"To tell the truth, mother," he said, "I do not think the idea quite so extraordinary as you do. When I was a boy, where I lived, if young people were converted it made all sorts of difference as to the things they did and the places they went to. We didn't expect to see them at dances, or at the theater, or any such places. If we did, everybody reckoned that they had backslidden. Those things were called 'worldly.' We have almost lost the word now, but it must be descriptive of something, I should say. If Winifred instinctively takes a stand against such things, without being talked to about it, I shall think it is the old sort of religion that she has somehow discovered, and shall not be sorry. I would really prefer it to be a kind that can be distinguished without reference to the church records. That variety is scarce enough, in all conscience!"

Winifred was surprised at her father's defense, and it unnerved her. Tears sprang to her eyes, and she nearly choked over the coffee with which she sought to hide her quivering lips. Hubert looked gratefully at his father. Mrs. Gray looked much depressed. She expected wise words of reproach that would settle the matter with Winifred and perhaps

save much trouble in the future. And now he really inclined to her view of the case! It was disappointing. But men, after all, did not always see social matters as women did. She was not accustomed to arguing with her husband, but this case required more resistance than usual.

"I am surprised, father," she said sorrowfully, "to hear you put it that way. I do not think you can realize what it means for a young woman to drop out of society. And I do not see how you can compare those times you speak of with the present. I am sure Doctor Schoolman frequently tells us what remarkable advance we have made over those times in every way. I hope you do not wish to go backward!" and Mrs. Gray felt a little flutter of triumph at her own unusual skill in argument. Nobody responded at once and she gathered courage to go on.

"I quite agree with that young man who spoke at our church in behalf of the Y. M. C. A. Gymnasium. You remember he said that the days had quite gone by for a 'long-faced Christianity.' I thought it a very sensible remark."

"Winifred has not troubled us with a very long face lately," remarked her father, glancing at her. "It has lengthened somewhat since we began our discussion, but I think it has been unusually cheerful for a week or so."

Winifred colored under these personal observations.

"I do not know what it will become," said her mother, "if she denies herself all gayety like those young persons you tell about."

"My memory of those young persons," said Mr. Gray, smiling, "is not a very melancholy one. Some of them were pretty severe upon themselves and other

people too, I will admit. But the most of them seemed to have found something so very satisfactory that these diversions were not required. I think Winifred is like the latter sort. I hope so. But, Hubert," turning to his son, "you look very much interested in this matter, but have said nothing. I suppose you agree with Winifred?"

"I do, sir," said Hubert readily.

"I thought so—I thought so," said his father, far from displeased with the reply. He did not explain to the little company that he, himself, had been one of the "young persons" referred to, and that great had been his comfort in the early days of the new life; but that a series of decoys had gradually led him back to the world's excitements and ambitions, until his professed Christianity had crystallized into the formal, eminently respectable, but powerless mold of conventional religion. His memory of early, ardent days was stirred, and he gladly warmed himself by its fires.

"But, Hubert," he went on, "you are a thoughtful young man—how do you account for the fact that Christ, Himself, attended social functions? He was not a recluse. He was at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, at a dinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee, at a feast in Bethany, and I do not know at how many other social gatherings. Indeed it was charged against Him that He received sinners and ate with them. What do you make of it?"

"It is a difficult question, father," said Hubert. "But I should think if we consider in what capacity He went to those places, and what He did when He got there, it might give us light."

"That is so," said Mr. Gray. "In what capacity do you think He went?"

"He had come to give life to men," said Hubert with kindling eyes. "He must go wherever He might find them—wherever occasion presented itself. I do not think He sought His own gratification."

"Nor do I," said Mr. Gray. "What about 'what He did when He got there'?"

"He performed a miracle, for one thing, at Cana," replied Hubert, whose diligent study of the Gospel of John now served him well.

"So He did," assented Mr. Gray. "If our little girl could do that, now, it might do to let her go," and he glanced at her fondly.

"Yes," said Hubert, "and He evidently became the central figure there, manifesting His glory. If one of His followers could capture Mrs. Butterworth's ball for Him it would surely pay to go. If I thought Winnie were to do that I would certainly put on a dress suit and go myself."

Hubert could not resist a teasing glance at his mother. That lady was plainly horrified. The thought of Winifred's "preaching," as she mentally called it, to anyone at the party, or doing any other eccentric thing, was far more shocking than her staying away.

Mr. Gray secretly enjoyed the look upon his wife's face.

"And the other places?" he went on.

"I am not familiar with the incident in the house of Simon the Pharisee," said Hubert.

"It is very striking and beautiful," said Mr. Gray. "Christ forgave a sinner—a woman of the city—and He had somewhat to say to His host, the Pharisee, about it. He spoke a very telling parable at that dinner."

Luke 7:36-44

Mrs. Gray again looked uneasy. She hoped Winifred would not feel it her duty, finally, to go, if it involved a religious errand.

"And at Bethany?" Mr. Gray continued.

"He was anointed for His burial," said Hubert, gravely.

"Ah, yes!" said his father in a subdued voice.

Both men thought reverently of the scene when one who had been raised from the dead sat at meat with Him who, for his sake and for all others, was Himself to die; and where one of the company poured upon His blessed feet love's grateful, costly sacrifice. To such a feast the true worshiper might indeed gladly go.

It was tacitly agreed that Winifred was to follow her own inclination with regard to the party. Mrs. Gray was far too loyal and amiable a wife to seriously oppose her husband's wish, and the sudden fear that Winifred, if she went to the party, might feel called upon to bear some sort of unusual testimony to her Lord affected the case strongly. But she grieved much over her daughter's prospective withdrawal from the assemblies of the "best people."

Winifred wrote a simple, truthful note to Mrs. Butterworth, and was relieved when it was dispatched. A sensitive dread of criticism and of doing an unusual thing was offset by the sweet consciousness of a happy fellowship conserved. No rude breath from the gay assembly's sensuous delights was to blow upon this flower of communion, so pure, so fragrant. So Winifred rejoiced, only an occasional shadow falling athwart her peace when she thought of one whose increasingly intimate fellowship threatened the life of the fair flower as surely as could Mrs. Butterworth's party. It was an uneasy suggestion, not a

recognized fact, and she put it hastily from her when it arose.

The evening of the party came and Mrs. Gray prepared herself and went, not too early and not too foolishly late. She had a faculty of striking the happy mean in life's proprieties. Winifred looked at her admiringly, with the candid conviction that no better dressed nor finer looking woman of her years would be there. She felt a pang of sorrow, too, in her mother's disappointment at leaving her behind, as she kissed her good-night. The carriage rolled away and presently bore its fair passenger to the door of her friend's brilliantly lighted house, where we will leave her.

CHAPTER X

THE CHURCH SOCIAL

ANOTHER social event followed hard on the heels of Mrs. Butterworth's party, and this Mrs. Gray succeeded in inducing both her son and daughter to attend, it being no less sacred a function than the quarterly Church Social. Hubert was not familiar with the institution, but so ardently burned his love for the Lord Jesus Christ that he now sought rather than avoided the company of those who knew Him, if so be some word of Him might be spoken. He longed for the fellowship of joy with those who, like himself, had been called out of darkness into "His marvelous light." This was denied in the formal services of the church, but surely the pent up devotion of the worshipers would find some avenue of expression when they met together socially without those restraints. Hubert was disposed to discount his own former estimate of church-members' sincerity, and did not doubt that many had found an experience as genuine as his own of the grace of God.

Mr. Gray did not care to go, preferring the library and the new number with its fascinating leaves uncut of a magazine, religio-worldly, that had solved for last days the problem beyond the Saviour's ken of how to serve God and mammon. Three went, however, in the comfortable carriage, to Mrs. Gray's great satisfaction, and drew up before the side entrance to the handsome church.

Bright light streamed from the parlor windows,

illuminating exquisitely stained pictures of the Apostles. Strains from a select orchestra greeted them as they entered the house, and Hubert recognized with a queer feeling of incongruity the overture from a well-known opera. The appealing notes of the violins drew his memory instantly to the production he had lately enjoyed, but he thrust the mental vision from him as unworthy of Christ, and tried not to listen to the seductive strains.

"A very poor selection for a Christian gathering," he thought to himself. Hubert was inexperienced, and to him a gathering of Christians meant a "Christian gathering."

The parlors presented a gayly attractive scene. They were decorated in red and white. Flowers and foliage were profuse, and the handsome toilettes of the ladies added much to the brilliant effect. Doctor Schoolman and his wife were receiving, and our party joined the line of guests making their orderly way toward them. Doctor Schoolman was very amiable, and his wife, a vivacious little lady in satin and artificial curls, chatted volubly with the members of the flock as they were dutifully presented.

"You naughty child!" she cried playfully to Winifred. "How could you desert us with your charming voice? Dear Mrs. Gray, you really should chastise your daughter—you really should!" And she shook the false curls with mock severity.

Mrs. Gray began her own lament and disclaimer of any responsibility in Winifred's apostasy.

"But the dear child's voice," she said extenuatingly, "has really been very much taxed."

"It's not that," said Winifred, honestly. But Mrs. Schoolman's eye was caught by the guest next in line and further explanations were unnecessary.

Meanwhile Doctor Schoolman had been greeting Hubert.

"Mr. Hubert Gray!" he exclaimed, very blandly. "Really this is a pleasure. I am glad to see you."

"I am glad to come," said Hubert, looking in the Doctor's face frankly. He wished to tell him how the Lord's people had become so vitally his. But the reverend gentleman did not note his earnest look.

"We are honored if you can give us some of your valuable time. You are such a man of business, your father tells me; and of scientific research, too, as we all know. It is kind to let us tear you away a little while from stocks and bonds and experiments."

"I have concluded, Doctor Schoolman," said Hubert gravely, "that there are interests more important than business or science."

"Quite so—quite so," said Doctor Schoolman. "I am glad you see it. We cannot afford to give all our attention to the graver pursuits of life. We need relaxation. 'All work and no play'—you know the old adage, eh? Ha, ha!"

And the minister laughed an easy, social laugh, not at all boisterous, but of a mirth well in hand and suited to the occasion.

Hubert looked at him almost with a frown. But we of wider experience are prepared to forgive the Doctor that he did not recognize the spiritual as the more important interests which might lead a young man to a church social. While Hubert debated a reply which should illuminate Doctor Schoolman as to his real motive, others were pressing up to take the hand of the minister, and he passed on with his mother and Winifred. They drifted not far away, and Hubert glanced frequently at Doctor Schoolman, watching his suave smile, almost catching the

smooth pleasantries that fell from his accustomed tongue—mild, clerical jests, wherewith he of the pulpit assures him of the pew, "I am as thou art." Very nice and proper it might all be, but to the one who longed to hear some word of Him whom he loved with such fresh, intense earnestness, it was as gall and wormwood.

He turned away and reviewed the whole scene about him. Mrs. Gray and Winifred were already in conversation with a group of people near him, and he heard his mother's soft, deprecating voice, as in reply to an eager storm of questioning. A flush was rising in his sister's face, and just a touch of iron determination, not unknown to the house of Gray, settled her shapely lips.

"Brave little soul!" he said to himself as he thought of the offenses, anent Mrs. Butterworth's party and the choir, for which she must answer in the court of popular opinion.

Not far from him a group of girls, very smartly dressed, standing in interesting proximity to a corresponding group of youths, flirted and giggled with evident enjoyment. A soberer group farther on Hubert found to be discussing the war situation in the East, as he drew near in a spirit of investigation. Some one in the party kindly drew him into their midst, where he joined the conversation for a time. Then there was a diversion, the new soprano having consented to sing. The murmur of voices subsided for the most part, save from a party of elderly people, hard of hearing, who continued their absorbing conversation throughout. Miss Trilling sang a love song with much expression, and responded to an encore with a humorous selection. The young people applauded loudly, and their elders smiled with in-

dulgent pleasure. Hubert continued his search, now rather despairing, for that for which he had come. This time he proceeded under the guidance of a man who offered to introduce him to some whom he did not know. They passed a quiet little wall-flower in a sober dress and he looked at her wistfully, seeing something in her face which made him think she knew his Lord and would talk of Him if there were but a chance. But his guide drew him on. He listened to bits of conversation, straining his ears in vain to hear one reference to Christ. The conversations were sometimes serious, more often gay, but none spoke of their Lord.

Hubert's heart withdrew within him, and he had no further inclination to speak to any of his new-found hope. A bitter theory was forming itself in his mind. This company was no different from any other in the world. Were they not all as he thought them in the days of his scepticism? If they knew Him whom he had come to see as the supremest Object of devotion in all the universe, could they forbear to speak of Him when they met together? Would they not be like flaming brands, igniting one another in their fervent zeal? He was not acquainted with the book of Malachi, and had perhaps never read the words: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name." Had he known the words they would have seemed a satire in this company.

"They do not know Him," he thought passionately, "and I—am I under a delusion? Is it all a farce?"

The suggestion was intense pain, and he put it from him. No, that One whom he had seen in his laboratory, the Man of the cross and of the glory, was no delusion. To admit Him to be such would be blackest midnight. He held on to his revelation with an iron clasp, but he longed to escape from an atmosphere that now stifled him. He made his way to his mother and Winifred.

"Shall I take you to the refreshment room?" he asked in a cold, strained voice.

Winifred looked at him anxiously, with eyes almost as troubled as his own.

"Yes," she said in an undertone, "and let us get away as soon as possible."

Mrs. Gray consented genially to be escorted to the room, elaborately decorated, where charmingly-gowned young women dispensed elegant refreshments. Several gentlemen, among whom Hubert recognized elders of the church, with their wives and other ladies, passed gay bandinage one to another as they sipped cooling ices. Hubert took nothing, but stood, silent and stern, while his mother, unconscious of the tempest in his breast, leisurely and daintily enjoyed her refreshment.

"Where are the poor people?" Hubert asked Winifred in something of his old sarcastic tone, as they left the room.

"I am afraid they are not here," said she, gently. Then she glanced around. "Yes, there are some, I see. There is Madge Nichol, that young woman in the stylish blue dress. She has done sewing for me, and seemed to need the money very much. But see how she is dressed! It must be much beyond her means."

Then a womanly intuition smote her, and she looked down at her own costly dress.

"I see how it is, Hubert," she said. "I think we are to blame. No girl would like to meet us in this way unless she were well dressed."

"I should advise them to stay away," said Hubert. "They would lose nothing valuable."

"That is what I shall do, I think," said Winifred with a sigh. "Do let us get away as soon as mother is ready."

"Shall I see if the carriage is waiting, mother?" said Hubert, interrupting when he could a discussion of the best places in which to spend the coming heated term.

"You might," Mrs. Gray replied. "I did not wish to stay late."

Hubert went out with alacrity to signal the faithful coachman, already in waiting.

They had soon departed, and both young people were glad to get out under the pure, gleaming stars and hasten the carriage to the dear home where the face of the Lord had first been seen by each, and was yet to be seen in increasing loveliness.

Hubert found his father still in the library, but asleep. He awoke as his son entered.

"Well, Hubert," he said, "did you have a good time?"

"No, sir," Hubert replied, "I had a wretched time."

"How was that?" his father asked. "What happened?"

"Nothing happened that I expected. I thought there would be some there who knew and loved Jesus Christ, and would wish to talk of Him. I did not

hear Him mentioned. I might as well have been at Mrs. Butterworth's ball so far as that goes."

"Well," said Mr. Gray, apologetically, "it was a social time, you know."

"Yes, I know it, father. That is why I went. Are not people usually most sociable about the things that interest them most? There was a company of people, professedly born from above and expecting soon to see the very glory of God. They take it very coolly, at all events. I believe it is a sham."

"Oh, Hubert," groaned his father, "don't say that."

"I don't mean," said Hubert quickly, "that Jesus is a sham. I believe," and his deep eyes softened, "that He is the most real fact in the universe. But the belief of those people, father! That sort of gathering is what Doctor Schoolman calls 'relaxation,' and I think he is right. I am convinced that *Christ is irksome to them;* a subject to be endured on Sundays, but to enjoy relaxation from at other times. Am I right?"

"Hubert," said Mr. Gray, slowly, "I believe you are partly right. But be deliberate and generous in your conclusions. Do not judge us too hastily or hotly."

Hubert winced as his father included himself in his own sweeping indictment. Mr. Gray went on:

"Some of us have known Him, even as you do, in earlier days. But we have lost the brightness of our vision through"—he hesitated—"through sin. We have followed afar off, and are very poor representatives now. Be patient, and it may be the warm zeal of such as you will quicken us again."

He looked at his son appealingly. Hubert's generous heart melted.

"Forgive me, father," he said humbly. "I have no right to judge anybody. Forget my tirade if you can. And I," he added with a faint smile, "will try to forget the Social."

CHAPTER XI

MR. BOND'S LECTURE

HUBERT recovered from the cold bath into which he had been thrown like a Spartan babe by his first contact with church sociability. His, as a new creature, was a vigorous constitution, and was destined to outlive many a shock incident to the earthly career of a heaven-born man. Both he and Winifred returned to their joy and calm, and were looking forward eagerly to Mr. Bond's lectures.

On the day of his arrival Mr. Gray came home to luncheon with an announcement.

"My dear," he said to his wife, "Mr. Selton tells me that his wife has unexpectedly been called to Chicago by her mother's illness, and they will be unable to entertain Mr. Bond. He suggested that we might like to do so."

Winifred and Hubert looked up with animation.

"Indeed! And you told him?" asked Mrs. Gray, with a housewifely instinct of defense against invasion.

"I told him," said Mr. Gray, "that I knew no reason why we could not do so, and that it would be a great pleasure. I told him, however, that I should ask you about it, and 'phone him if there were any arrangement to prevent it."

Mrs. Gray considered. The chief guest room stood ready, immaculate in yellow and white, since the spring cleaning. There was no reason why it should be denied, but she had hoped that its repose would

not be broken until Miss Virginia White, her most aristocratic friend, should make her promised visit. However, it would be manifestly unreasonable to refuse to receive Mr. Bond, and she could not offer him another room while that stood empty. Yes, the yellow-and-white room must be sacrificed.

"No, Father," she said amiably, "there is no reason why we cannot take him. When will he come?"

"He arrives this evening by the eight o'clock train from New York. Hubert, perhaps you would like to meet him?"

"I should," said Hubert. "I am glad he is coming here."

"So am I," said Winifred. "It will be lovely."

That afternoon Winifred "called up" her friend Adèle, and the telephone transmitted a lively conversation. The result of it was that Adèle promised to go with Winifred to Mr. Bond's Bible lectures; at least to one, to see if she liked it.

In the evening Hubert met Mr. Bond at the station. They were scarcely seated in the light trap and facing toward home when the young minister said:

"Well, Mr. Gray, have you found God demonstrable?"

"Yes!" Hubert almost shouted, and the two grasped each other's hands in the strong grip of a fraternity never formed by man.

"I thought so," said Mr. Bond.

"How did you know?" said Hubert.

"I thought it would be so," said the other, "and I saw it in your face as we met. Thank God for it."

"Amen," said Hubert fervently.

Mr. Bond led Hubert on with keen interest to tell of the process of his search after God, and of the

illumination brighter than the light of day, that came to him when the Spirit shone with such clear luster on the Word. To Hubert it seemed the happiest hour of his life, as he conversed with a man who seemed to understand the processes of his own heart, and to be thoroughly at home in the new world into which he himself had entered.

The drive was all too brief, but later in the evening, when good-night had been spoken to the rest of the household, the two men sat in the unlighted veranda and talked until midnight of Christ and the matters of His realm.

The *tout ensemble* of the company gathered to hear Mr. Bond's first lecture was somewhat curious. It was not a large congregation, but it was representative, being drawn from the interested or curious of nearly every kind of church or religious coterie in the city. Keen Bible students were there, notebooks in hand, prepared to capture any new suggestion which might help them. The critical were there, representing various shades of belief and prejudice, from the quiet repressionist, who, disdaining emotion, views with dispassionate coldness the great tenets of the faith, to the irrepressible enthusiast whose spiritual understanding is often lost beneath a foam of feeling; from the instructed brother who reads his title clear with logical accuracy in the Scriptures and glories in his standing with belieing indifference to his state, to the anxious soul whose hope of heaven veers with every changing wind of fitful emotion. Each critic was bent on discovering if the stranger would hew faithfully to the line of his own demarcation.

There were Mr. Selton's friends, people of his own

station, who responded to his personal invitation to come, prepared to listen courteously, to express polite thanks at the end for the pleasure conferred, and, for the most part, to find various lions in the way of attending again, profound as were their regrets!

Mr. Gray and Hubert both succeeded in getting the hour away from business, and the latter arrived at the hall just as his mother, with Winifred and Adèle, was entering and joined them. Adèle formed a singular figure in the midst of the assembly. No thought of unusual sobriety had toned down her usually stylish and somewhat striking costume, and a large red hat of the milliner's finest skill shaded becomingly her piquant face. Her keen, merry eyes studied the congregation, and she could not resist whispering a few impressions to Winifred before the lecture began.

"Isn't this a funny crowd?" she asked. "Such a combination! Look at that meek little body in the front row and the fat dowager behind her. And do see that anarchist-looking man at the side who is looking at Mr. Bond as though he would eat him up. Do you know who he is? I hope he hasn't a bomb in his pocket."

"I don't know him, but I'll ask Hubert," said Winifred, and she passed the question along.

"Hubert, who is that man yonder—the one with the high shoulders. Adèle thinks he is an anarchist."

"I think so, too," said Hubert. "At least he is a socialist of a very virulent type. He has come as a critic, I suppose. He professes to study religionists, and writes scornful letters about them to a socialist paper."

Winifred communicated this intelligence to Adèle,

who was much pleased with her own acumen. Presently she resumed:

"Do look at that woman ahead of us!—the one in the little bonnet, and so distressingly neat. She has been surveying us. She doesn't approve of me, but she commiserates me. That's plain enough. Well, I am a sinner, no doubt, and she has found me out! If she looks around again do see what you think of her."

Mrs. Bland did look around again, and both young ladies observed her. A rather shapely mouth was settled in an expression of studied repose, and her eyes rested approvingly, or with patient toleration, on others who were minded to come to the Bible lecture. Her hair was parted with conscientious exactness, and upon her whole appearance there sat the picture of conscious piety.

"Oh, I can't stand her!" whispered Adèle in an ecstasy of dislike. "I should fly if I had to look at her long! Sister Saint Serena—the Salubrious!"

Winifred choked down a laugh at Adèle's suddenly inspired alliteration, while Hubert looked a dignified reproach. It was a poor preparation, certainly, for what was to follow. Adèle's face straightened innocently, while Winifred still struggled to suppress her risibility.

There were few preliminaries before Mr. Bond proceeded to speak. His subject dealt with vital matters, with underlying truth upon which rests all lesser fact, and he spoke with a calm certainty, unlike "the Scribes." His lecture betrayed a familiarity with the Scriptures such as his auditors had seldom met with before, and a reverence for them born not of superstition but of some apprehension of their unfathomed depths. Our little party listened with fas-

cinated interest. Especially was Hubert delighted when from the portions that had been the favorite debating ground of his sceptical friends riches of meaning were discovered that stamped unmistakably the divine imprimatur upon them. Winifred and Adèle forgot Mrs. Bland and every one else listening; the one with sweet content in hearing anything that concerned the One she loved, and the other with an awakened interest in lines of thought she had never pursued before.

"He is *splendid!*" said Adèle at the close of the lecture. "I am coming every day. Unless—there's that bothersome card party Thursday! Stupid affair! But I won't go. What's the use?"

And so Mr. Bond secured a regular attendant.

Many were the expressions of interest, some of them very genuine. Mrs. Gray had listened to her guest with valorous attempts to resist the habitual afternoon nap, and told him later how very good indeed the lecture was and hoped he would quite understand how manifold were the cares of a household, and how unavoidable her hindrances, should she be unable to be present every day. And Mr. Bond did understand his gentle hostess very well, and often as he saw her in her home his meditative eye rested upon her fair mother-face with an expression of chivalrous pity and of earnest longing.

The second day's lecture found the audience sifted to some degree of the idly curious and of a part of the critics unto whose standards the speaker had failed to attain. As Mr. Bond's language was remarkably free from the current phraseology of the schools of teaching, it was difficult for theological birds to discover at once whether indeed he were of their feather, and a second hearing, at least, was

needed. But no uncertain note was sounded to the alarm of any advocate of the most orthodox written creed or of the severest unwritten code of belief, in answer to the pivotal question of all theology: Jesus, the Son of Man—*Who is He?* None gave more ardent honor to that Mystery of godliness, who

> "Was manifested in the flesh,
> Justified in the spirit,
> Seen of the angels,
> Preached among the Gentiles,
> Believed on in the world,
> Received up in glory."

If some fell away from the gathering, there were new hearers, brought through the good report of those interested, and the company numbered rather more than before. Adèle's "anarchist" was again there, fastening his pale, strange eyes upon the face of the lecturer whether he spoke or was quietly sitting; at times half crediting its look of candor, then relapsing into sneering hopelessness of finding an honest man among his class. He determined to try his favorite test of a benevolent scheme before Mr. Bond should go away, and see if he would abide by the Sermon on the Mount.

To-day the lecturer's theme was Redemption, and from all the cardinal divisions of the Scriptures he drew illustrations of their one consistent theme. It was when he reached the Day of Atonement under the Levitical institution, that Adèle Forrester's interest reached its height. He drew a vivid, simple picture, as a teacher might present an object lesson to a child, of the offering, the priest, the waiting congregation, the presentation in the Holiest of All, and the blessing of the people.

Adèle leaned forward in her seat as he proceeded. She had never seen it just like that before. She imagined herself one of the Jewish congregation, with a guilty score against her which needed to be wiped out. What if there were a flaw in the offering? What if the priest were not acceptable, and she were to go back with the debt uncanceled—with reconciliation not effected? Her mind leaped forward before the speaker could reach the point to the Lamb without spot or blemish and the High Priest who "ever liveth to make intercession" for His people. Was that what it meant? And was it already accomplished? The speaker was saying:

"There is both correspondence and contrast here. In the first case there was indeed remission of sins, because the Lord had covenanted to meet His people upon that ground. But it was temporary, and the work imperfect. The *taking away of sins* was not actual, but pictorial, each sacrifice pointing forward to the effective one to come. There was no vital relationship between the victim and the worshiper, and the death of one could not be made actually good to the other. Nor could a new life of righteousness be imparted. So the work was imperfect, unfinished, always looking forward to the perfect, eternal redemption which should be wrought by the One who has power to impart the virtue of His death and the power of His endless life."

Before Adèle's mind there came the vision of a vain, empty, earthward life. But clearer still she saw the Lamb bearing away all offenses and her hopeless coming short, and the High Priest who with perfect acceptance presented the offering of His blood for her. Why had she never seen it before?

Oh, what grace! Oh, what a lightened soul!—to be free as a child unborn of any guilt of sins! She caught her breath with a little convulsive sob and sank back in her seat, grasping Winifred's hand with a tight, expressive grip. She trusted herself with no words when the meeting ended, but blinking back the tears that sparkled in her eyes made a hasty exit from the hall.

The days of Mr. Gerald Bond's visit to the Grays were all happy ones. Hubert and Winifred were living in a new world of revelation, and delighted exceedingly in the help one well instructed and "apt to teach" was able to give them in the mystery of the faith. Mr. Gray, too, enjoyed his guest's presence and brought knotty questions to him daily for solution. Mrs. Gray recognized the excellent spirit that was in him, and found herself quietly wondering more than once why the other ministers she knew did not seem equally interested in the matters of their calling when off duty, so to speak, but were so much at home in all the affairs of the world. Gerald Bond seemed to live in the atmosphere of the holy things in which he ministered, and Mrs. Gray looked upon him with an admiration akin to awe. But he was nevertheless so thoroughly a man, of finest sympathy, courteous, gentle, and withal possessed of a genial, penetrating wit which all enjoyed, that Mrs. Gray could not simply admire him from afar, but took him into her heart with a warm liking. She looked forward with real regret to the day when the yellow-and-white room would be without its occupant.

Hubert came in for the greater share of the young man's leisure hours, and evening often saw them pacing the garden walks, or lingering meditatively by

its fountain, in deepest conversation. In Hubert's soul still the question was burning, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and beyond a thin veil of time the answer was waiting him. "God . . . hath appointed thee to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from His mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for Him."

The Bible lectures came and went, having no more rapt listener than Adèle Forrester, who marveled at the light that had come to her, illuminating all truth that she had formally learned and recited, and adding wondrous things out of the Law never hinted at before. When Sunday came she went to church a true worshiper, and sang with all her heart:

> "O sing unto the Lord a new song
> For He hath done marvellous things."

She did not follow Winifred's course in retiring from the choir, and explained to her afterwards:

"It did not seem the right thing for me, dear, although I think you did just right. You see, I am not a star singer, for one thing, and never sing solos. So my temptation to show off would not be like yours with your exquisite voice. Though I do believe, Winifred," she said earnestly, "that one might do that some day—sing solos, I mean—with a sincere heart to the Lord, and not be vain about it. And oh, it would be so sweet! To praise Him with one's whole heart 'in the great congregation'—to try and tell about Him!—but, after all, there is no verse chaste enough and no melody sweet enough to describe Him! Oh, Winifred, when I see *His wounds*," and Adèle covered her eyes as though, shutting out other things, she could see Him, while her voice sank to a sob—

"it breaks my heart! What a silly girl I have been —and it was for me!"

Presently she resumed: "When I sang Sunday, I remembered something that Mr. Bond had said. I was afraid lest some inattention or failure to just grasp and mean the sentiments I sang might make my worship unacceptable. But I remembered that in the Tabernacle service after the priest had done all he could—at the brazen altar, and the laver, you know, having his heart set right and his conduct cleansed—still there was provided blood on the horns of the altar of incense beside which he worshiped. After all he could do he might still need it, I suppose. So I thought that although my poor service is very imperfect, and must come far short of what it ought to be, at best, still there will always be the blood and I shall take refuge in that."

Winifred looked at her friend wonderingly.

"That is very beautiful, Adèle," she said. "I am glad to see it."

Adèle's words had opened a dim vista of possibility, very precious, and had suggested arms wherewith to resist any shrinking self-fear or accusation that might attack her by the way. But though her "gift," as Mrs. Butterworth and her mother called it, might some day be transmuted into a true gift of the Spirit, she felt with instinctive spiritual repugnance that its sphere of use would not be the former theater of her vanity. Adèle might still sing in the chancel the canticles of the church, but as for her the associations of the choir of Doctor Schoolman's church were far too unhallowed to admit of a return to them. To her it was so clear that she wondered a little why Adèle and she should take no nearer ground as to their respective action.

"I suppose," she said aloud with a little perplexity, "that we must each do what seems right, according to the clearest light we have. We may not both see all the truth about anything at the same time."

"No," said Adèle with a decisive shake of her head, "and we can't walk by each other's consciences. But talking about seeing 'all the truth' makes me think of something. You know I was in the Berkshire Hills last summer? Well, I saw Greylock from several points of view. From one it seemed a rather sharp spur; from another it was long and obtuse; and from the last,—when somebody pointed out an ordinary, featureless ascent and said: 'That's Greylock,' I could scarcely believe it. I imagine our views of the truth are somewhat like that. It will take time to walk all around it, I think."

"I think so," said Winifred reflectively. "Then if somebody had met you when you had seen but one view of the mountain, and had described simply another—"

"We should have quarreled!" said Adèle.

CHAPTER XII

THE SOUL HEARS A CAUSE

MIDSUMMER heat was advancing and the fashionable residents of the city where our story is located—a city not too large, cleanly, healthful, and beautiful for situation—found it necessary to leave town. Mrs. Gray was among the number whose constitution demanded a change from the accustomed air and scene, and from the round of conventional home life to the equally conventional routine of life in a summer hotel. At least, she supposed she required it. And was it not the regular thing to do? And had she not arranged with Mrs. Dr. Greene long ago that they should secure quarters together in the Loftimore House overlooking the blue waters of Silverguile Lake? But when the last trunks were packed and gone, and she looked around in the cool quiet of her own home, the soft eyes were troubled and she said to Winifred:

"I wish I were not going, dear. It is a trouble, after all. And you are not going! You will come for a little while, won't you, child?" And she gave her an already homesick caress.

Winifred promised, if it could be arranged. Mr. Gray and Hubert both found it impossible to leave but for a short time, and Winifred was glad of an excuse to stay with them, presiding in the quiet house with its summer lack of visitors and improved opportunity for her new and engrossing pursuit. She would go on to know God better, as she found

Him mirrored in the clear, still waters of His Word.

The days sped by all too rapidly. Adèle did not leave for the summer, and the two spent hours together, comparing impressions and experiences and the light gained upon the Scripture portions which they were reading simultaneously. Then Winifred rehearsed to Hubert at night their discoveries and difficulties, and he added the wisdom given to him to their own. Sometimes his sister quoted to him surprisingly original and apt comments from Adèle and he wondered silently. If he had wished to hear from the "sensible interior," he now did so, and it spoke from the depths of a new spiritual insight.

George Frothingham continued to pay occasional court to his ladye faire. The time for his customary holidays drew near, and as he arranged for a flying European trip which he had promised himself this year, it entered his heart to close the anticipated compact with Winifred for the life journey together. Very sweet were the hopes which mingled with shrewd business calculations, and he congratulated himself on assured prospects.

But Winifred was not happy when she thought of him. His coming gave her pleasure always, and it was anticipated with a shy new consciousness since the night they had read each other's hearts more certainly through the tell-tale windows of their eyes. But though his coming gave her pleasure, it left her always with a disappointment. Concerning the one thing that had come to be the most vital interest in her life they were not in sympathy. Sometimes when the beauties in Christ Jesus seemed most patent to her own soul, it seemed that he must surely see them if represented to him. But the mention of that Name

froze upon her lips when met with the usual bantering jest, or indifferent acquiescence, accompanied by a look at his watch or the sudden memory of an engagement. The conviction could not be denied that a wall as thick as that of a tomb stood between them in matters of the spirit.

"He is dead," she confessed to herself in honest grief, "as dead as I was before my quickening—just as it says in the Ephesians. He makes no more response to spiritual things than would one of the people in their graves in the cemetery if I talked to them. And what fellowship can life have with death? But—but—I love him!"

The Flesh cried out for the sovereignty of human love, but the Spirit argued for the reign of Christ. Between the two the Soul stood, a tortured arbiter, and heard the cause.

The Spirit pleaded:

"O Soul, if to you to live is Christ, why do you bring into your life's closest fellowship an alien to Him? Why do you give the supremest place of earthly relationship, pledging life-long loyalty and obedience, to one whose mind is foreign—even 'enmity'—to the law of Christ? Can you follow the course of life he would plan, and still serve Christ? Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

"You might win him," the Flesh pleaded. "A woman's power is very great. Remember he loves you."

"I have no power now," the Soul ruled.

"You might have eventually," the Flesh persisted. "The example of a godly life will win."

"You cannot live a godly life while you walk with him," interposed the Spirit. "'The friendship of the world is enmity with God.'"

Winifred was startled. "That is a very strong text," she thought. "But it probably doesn't mean that. Godly women have lived Christian lives with very ungodly husbands."

"But they did not walk together," argued a voice. "They were only in part united. In the realm of the spirit—the realm that should lead—they were divided."

"There is encouragement held out to believing wives in the Scripture," suggested one who knows how to quote Scripture for his purpose, "that they may win their unbelieving husbands by their chaste behavior."

"There is no encouragement given to believing women to marry unbelieving men," said the Spirit defensively. "A woman whose faith finds her so united may have hope. But can you expect the favor of God upon a mission undertaken in disobedience?"

"Is it quite disobedience?" pondered Winifred weakly. "I must look in the Bible to find all I can about it."

The Flesh resisted this course and suggested delay, at least in searching the Scriptures about it. She might not understand the Scriptures. It would be better to ask some Christian friend.

So the matter was delayed, but not for long. For the Soul grew unhappy with the weight of a matter withheld from the clear light of the Word, and a mist rose between it and the face of Christ. Any sorrow could be borne rather than lose vision of His face, and Winifred brought her cause at last with sobs and tears to the feet of Him who had been crucified, determined that His word should end the case at any cost. Then she searched the Book with what result each Bible student knows. She found permission for a Christian's marriage "in the Lord." But the

whole testimony of the Scripture frowned darkly upon a yoking together with unbelievers; and what yoke was closer than the one she contemplated?

The Spirit said amen; and Winifred remembered how all her interviews with George Frothingham had left her not helped at all in the way of the spirit, but rather hindered. What would be a lifelong fellowship? She cast to the winds all thought of inaugurating a dubious mission for the young man's salvation through means of a forbidden fellowship, and so the Soul, led by the Spirit, took wood and fire and repaired to the mount of sacrifice.

The decisive evening came, and Frothingham, never more elegant nor more winning, appeared. He was not dismayed by Winifred's unusual constraint, for he had noticed a growing shyness and drew his own happy conclusion from it. He had brought a roll of music—a new love song, into which he poured the richness of his mellow voice while Winifred accompanied him. But her fingers trembled over the keys and she struck a false note occasionally.

Later they were standing beneath the chandelier, the light falling upon Winifred's pale face, as she answered words he had been speaking.

"No, I cannot marry you," she said, and her voice shrank from the words as much for the pain they must cause him as for her own. "It is impossible."

His handsome face clouded with surprise and alarm. He pleaded, expostulated, reasoned, but in vain. Winifred was firm, and a certain womanly dignity hid the grief that she felt, lest its display should afterward bring humiliating regret. She told him as clearly as she could the reason why she could not become his wife, and to his unspiritual judgment

it seemed a petty cause. He was accustomed to seeing a type of religion that could exist in harmony with the world, and he did not see why the fact that Winifred was a Christian and had become uncommonly interested in that sort of thing should hinder her being the best of wives to a worldly man like himself. They need not quarrel about it. As to any scruples that might be entertained in her conscientious little head about all the gaiety he cared for, he inwardly credited himself with skill to overcome them when once she should be his. But Winifred made it clear to him at last that the matter was unmistakably and finally settled, and deep was his chagrin. Wounded pride rose with a sense of his rejection, and he straightened his fine figure in haughty coldness.

"Very well," he said. "I must abide by your decision, and we will part."

"We shall still be friends?" she asked timidly.

He did not look at the little hand she outstretched. "If we cannot be more than friends, we must be less now," he answered coldly.

He bade her an abrupt good-night and she watched him depart. Still standing where he had left her she looked through the graceful palms that from their setting of marble partially veiled the drawing-room from the hall and saw him standing, never so handsome as now in his pale sternness, fastidiously drawing on his gloves according to his wont.

Her heart made a final appeal. Was she mad, that she should drive him away when *she loved him?* Let her call him back! Love is sovereign. Let it rule.

As a very tiny object may blot out the widest view if it be near enough to the vision, so this glittering treasure of an earthly love swung before her eyes, and

it hid the broader prospect of fair and eternal joys in Christ. "Command that these stones be made bread," one had said to her Lord when he hungered, and the same strong and subtle one counseled now: "Take the joy that is offered! Your heart will be starved and desolate if you let it go. Call him back!"

Almost her weak heart assented.

"George!" the cry rose, but it died, mercifully, in a whisper upon her dry lips.

Frothingham had quite prepared himself to emerge from the house—for the last time, probably—and he passed out, giving no backward glance at the figure that stood beneath the light in the drawing-room.

Winifred roused from her statue-like stillness as the door closed behind him. The heavy breath of odorous flowers stole in through an open window and sickened her. For years after she could not dissociate their fragrance from the sorrow of that hour. She turned to the piano. He had left his music—and he would never come back for it! She turned away and climbed the stairs with heavy steps to her own room. And there we will leave her, where, after the battle, a heavenly Visitor was to come forth with bread and wine for her refreshing.

Matthew 4:3

CHAPTER XIII

EXPERIENCE

WINIFRED'S heart did not break. Or, if it broke, it was quickly healed, for there dwelt in the house One whose office it is to bind up the broken-hearted. It was not that she did not grieve, or that no void cried out again and again to be filled. But she learned a paradox as the days went on: of an inexplicable peace beneath the sharpest pain, and of a buoyant joy that would not be held down by sorrow. Hubert looked on, making mental notes as to what had happened, but asking no questions.

Our trio of young people who had entered a life of worship found their hearts impelling them toward fields of service also. Winifred sought in many quiet ways to make known to others Him whom she had come to know with such delight, and a casual visit from Adèle one day threw light upon the occupation of the others.

"By the way, Winifred," Miss Forrester said, apropos of some topic discussed, "your brother gave a splendid talk at the Cleary Street Mission last night. Oh, you ought to have heard him! It was fine!"

Winifred opened her eyes widely. "Hubert at the Mission last night? He never told me."

"I suspect he doesn't let his left hand know what his right hand is doing," suggested Adèle. "But he certainly was there. And when Mr. McBride asked him to speak he promptly did so. It was splendid! Not simply what he said, you know, but the fact that

he said it—a business man talking in a matter-of-fact, business way to other men of something he evidently thought the most important matter in the world. Of course most of the people were of a far different class from his, but you would never guess it from his words. He didn't patronize them a bit. I liked that so much. And you should have seen how those men fastened their eyes on him and listened to what he said."

"How lovely!" cried Winifred. "I wish I had been there. But pray tell me, Adèle, how happens it that you were there?"

"Oh, I am a regular attendant in Cleary Street," said Adèle laughing. "At least I go regularly on certain nights in the week and play the organ—a wretched, squeaky, little thing—and raise my voice on Sankey hymns also."

"You do!" cried Winifred with a mixture of amusement, dismay and admiration in her voice. "Well, I declare!"

"I don't see why you should be so shocked," said Adèle, enjoying her friend's astonishment. "Pray, why shouldn't I go? Do you doubt my qualifications? I am not the musician you are, dear, but my skill is quite up to those tunes, I assure you."

"I hope you don't wear that red hat of yours and your usual stunning costumes, Adèle?"

"It occurred to me after I had gone a few times," said Adèle quietly, "that it might be well to modify my gear. I think you would approve of my revised toilet. It is very simple."

"Adèle, I know you can't help looking well, whatever you wear," said Winifred, who suddenly observed a somewhat altered "gear" in evidence. "If you should put on a Salvation Army bonnet it would

look stylish. It couldn't help itself. But please tell me more about the Mission. How happened you to go at all?"

"I heard Mr. McBride speak at a meeting. He told of the work of the Mission, and of the need of helpers—especially of somebody to help in the music. It occurred to me that that was the kind of assistance I might give, and that it would be very nice to contribute in some small way, at least, to the work of the Mission. And," she continued very gravely, "I volunteered and was gladly accepted."

"That is very noble, I think," said Winifred. "But what did your friends think?"

"I did not ask them," Adèle answered coolly. "I have fallen from caste, anyhow, and it doesn't matter much. You know since I have seen the Lord"—it was Adèle's way of putting it—"I have tried to—to witness to Him in some way or other to my old friends; and the result has been a pretty liberal letting alone from them. His name does not seem a very welcome one—outside of a church!" Then she went on with a gleam of indignant sorrow in her bright eyes: "That is what breaks one's heart! That these very people may kneel beside you in church and recite His holy name as glibly as possible; but outside—it is unwelcome! Winifred, *can* it be a Christian life at all into any avenue of which Christ is an intrusion? Oh, if they loved Him—if they had ever seen Him at all!—they would be so glad of any mention of Him!"

After a moment a gleam of amused memory succeeded Adèle's pained outburst. She went on:

"The other night I think I reached the climax of my fall into disfavor. You know these summer evenings at the Mission we take the organ and hymn

books and go out before the door and have a street meeting. Well, on this occasion our open-air meeting was in full swing and our usual score of auditors were lined up in the gutters and everywhere to hear. Mr. McBride had announced "The best Friend to have is Jesus," and was himself swinging his arms and singing lustily, while I played and pumped the panting little instrument and sang as loudly as I could, too. Suddenly there turned down the street a handsome automobile (I don't know why, for they never go down that street) and in it the Misses Steele and Miss Proudfeather from Baltimore. To crown it all, with them was seated my precious Cousin Dick! Our poor little crowd huddled aside to let them pass. They all saw me and Dick took off his hat with great ceremony; but the ladies evidently thought they would spare me the mortification of a recognition under the circumstances. I couldn't help laughing within myself, though it was a bit embarrassing. Dick was hilarious over it. He evidently sees nothing improper in it, but a very good joke. He says he expects to hear me preaching there yet. I told him it might be to his benefit if he did."

Both laughed. "But just think, Adèle," said Winifred, "how infinitely better to be in that little street crowd *with the Lord,* than driving about in the finest motor car without Him!"

"Yes!" cried Adèle, "I wouldn't trade places for worlds!"

"I should think not," said Winifred, with scorn of the idea.

Adèle was finding out, like her friend, that the way of the cross brings separation, and she had her own peculiar tests as to faithful witnessing. Her merry-hearted cousin drew her out in words more

frequently than any other, and plied her with questions concerning this new type of religion.

"It's no new sort of religion at all," she insisted. "It's just the old sort you read of in the New Testament—and the prayer-book! Only I am afraid I never really had it before—or it had not really got me. If people would only be sincere, Dick, you would find it is the same sort."

"I do not think the ordinary sort is much good," said Dick, with the air of a connoisseur in religions.

It was to be lamented that the present incumbent at St. John's had not met with the young man's very hearty favor. The freshly introduced intoning struck him humorously. He imitated it in ordinary remarks about the house.

"Where's—my—hat?" he inquired in a whining chant, after the manner of the unfortunate rector's plaintively intoned "Let us pray."

Adèle, always alive to the ridiculous, laughed; but still she wished he would not be irreverent.

"The way we go through the service," said Dick, "is so as to relieve it of as much sense as possible. No wonder some of us turn out hypocrites. But you don't, Adèle. However, I'll reserve my estimate of your case till we see how you hold out at your new gait."

So Dick watched the "new gait," and Adèle prayed that it might be a walk worthy of the Lord.

Meantime Hubert was pursuing his study of divinity in a normal way—with an open Bible and the Spirit of the Author to interpret. He sought also the fellowship of His people and deep was his perplexity as he found into how many countless sects the "one body" had been divided. Very contrary

to the Bible it seemed, but very helplessly he stood before the fact that seemed as hopeless of remedy as of denial. What ought he, one unit among the whole, to do about it? Kindly people sought to draw him into their various fellowships, and he peered into their folds and sought to find the place where his Lord was most honored and His presence most manifest. He found old churches, great and cold, whose service moved with slumbrous calm, and his ardent soul was chilled. He found others where activity bristled and cheerfulness prevailed, but where the world held court as obvious as in the market square; and from these he turned away with a still sharper grief. He found other congregations built in strife and schism, but with some fragrance still of the name of Jesus Christ, and rejoiced that He was preached.

"'They feared the Lord and served their own gods,'" he said to himself, as almost everywhere he saw the strange mingling of worship of the true God with the too patent service of the gods of pleasure and of wealth.

He found little companies, gathered in protest from shameless worldliness or infidel denial of the Lord, and with them he had sympathy, but still looked hungrily for a fuller expression of the truth than they offered. He found himself in companies where correct, punctilious statements of the truth abounded, and where the most careful zeal sought to restore an apostolic order of worship. But he found that the statements grew dry and juiceless in their formal exactness, and that prescribed form could not insure the animating Spirit without which it was as useless as the phylacteries of the Pharisees. He concluded that truth was deeper and fresher than any definitions of it, as the fountain excels the cistern; and that

life was sovereign over form, though in form it embody itself.

He found perfection nowhere. After a disappointing meeting, the climax of a series of experiences in which arguments from various schools of doctrine had jostled against each other, and the varying phases of practice, emotional, anti-emotional, informal and ritualistic, with the intervening shades of difference, had presented themselves, he stood in the veranda at home with Winifred and described to her the procession of rival claims which a divided church presents to a Christian man's adherence, and ended with the question:

"Where shall we find the truth, Winifred?"

"In Christ," she answered simply.

"You are right, wise little sister," he said admiringly. "And there we will look for it."

He turned from his quest for perfection in any detachment of the church and sought the place where God would have him, not alone for the green pasture to be found but for the testimony to be given. Deeper lessons were learned as time advanced—lessons of "grace" as well as "truth." Keen discrimination was tempered by love toward that Body which, though distorted and maimed, was still beloved by her Lord, and though besieged by error was still "the pillar and ground of the truth."

CHAPTER XIV

A "WITLESS, WORTHLESS LAMB"

THE air at Silverguile Lake did not altogether agree with Mrs. Gray. Rheumatic damps rose from the water, and the mornings were chilly and uncomfortable. The inane round of dressing, eating, appearing in the veranda, taking the daily drive, and other mild etcetera, grew irksome; and, beyond all, the faces of the dear ones at home were longed for. Winifred came for a few days, and then the place brightened like a cloudy day that surprises the world with sunshine at its close.

Mrs. Gray was far from well when the home journey was undertaken, and Winifred looked at her with apprehension. But they traveled comfortably and reached home in the evening where welcome waited. But an alarming chill overtook the mother before she had retired that night, and the doctor was hastily summoned. The chill was a harbinger of serious illness, and the cheerful house became shrouded in dread of coming sorrow. Winifred devoted herself eagerly to her mother, but professional skill was needed also. The telephone rang frequent calls from the office during the anxious days to inquire for the loved patient, and life for the time was enveloped in the one painful query: Will mother live?

The doctor gave sparing reports, but careful directions. Winifred moved about the house with a pale face and frightened eyes, until the doctor told her that she evidently needed his services also, and

that she must not let her mother see her with that face. Then she fled to her room and poured out her pitiful need to God, and begged His grace for calm and cheerfulness. With unfailing faithfulness He gave her what she asked, and she went back to minister with Him at hand to help.

"Winnie, dear, is that you?" said a faint voice from the bed.

"Yes, mother."

"Come here, dear, let me look at you."

Winifred went and sat beside her where they could look into each other's faces.

"Dear, do you think I am very ill? Does the doctor say so?"

"He has not said much, mother. But he is taking every care."

"Yes, I see. What do you think, child?"

"I do not know, mother. But we hope you are getting on as well as possible."

"Winnie," said she again, and her voice came with difficulty, "I think I am very ill. I have had sickness before, but not like this. Things seem slipping away."

Winifred's eyes filled with tears, but she forced them back. "Do not think that, mother," she pleaded.

"They are all slipping away," insisted the sick woman. "Every one—father, Hubert, you—everyone—everything I know—all slipping away."

Winifred looked to her invisible Companion in an agony of entreaty for her mother. Presently Mrs. Gray's voice again arose plaintively from the pillow:

"I am afraid—I am afraid, Winnie. I don't know—the things ahead! These,"—and her poor hands closed themselves over the counterpane as

though they would try to hold the tangible, known things—"are slipping away, and I—am afraid."

"God never slips away," whispered Winifred.

"No?" queried the mother. "But I—can't—see Him! I don't—know Him."

So the secret, before unconfessed and unrealized, came out at last. She did not know Him. The church, the service, the minister,—the external routine of a nominally Christian life, all was slipping away into a mist of past that could not be retained. And now the soul stood, a terror-stricken stranger, before the things not known.

"I am afraid," repeated the faint voice.

Winifred longed for words of comfort, but they did not seem at hand.

The white-robed nurse came into the room with a little air of professional authority. "I think our patient should not talk any more just now," she said, and Winifred retired.

She met Hubert in the hall and drew him to her own little sitting-room, where they pleaded with God together for the eternal comfort of the beloved sufferer.

Evening came and Winifred was again by her mother's side.

"Winifred," said the gentle voice, stronger to-night for the increased fever.

"Yes, dear mother?"

"Winnie, dear, would you be afraid if—if you were ill—like me?—if you were going to—"

"To die," she was about to say, but she could not speak the word. She shivered instead, as though a cold wind had struck her.

Winifred did not wait for the unwelcome word.

"No—I think not, mother," she said simply.

"Why not? Is it not dark—what we do not know?"

"But I know God," said Winifred earnestly, "and Jesus Christ. And they are there—in the things we cannot see. The Apostle Paul said, 'For me to live is Christ; *to die is gain.*'"

The words brought no comfort. "'To live is Christ,'" repeated the sick one musingly. "If that were so—?" she was silent for a few moments, and then broke out hopelessly: "No, no! To live has not been Christ! It has been myself, and you all, and these things! It is not gain to die! It is loss!—loss!—loss of everything I know!"

Her voice rose excitedly, and her glistening fevered eyes looked about restlessly. Winifred feared that the nurse would come, and finding her worse, end the interview. So she prayed that God would calm the dear patient and give them both His needed grace for the hour. And He heard.

"Let me straighten your pillow, mother dear," she said, and suited the action to the word. Her mother clasped the deft hands that arranged things so comfortably, and looked long with yearning fondness into her daughter's face.

"Winnie," she said finally, "could you sing just a little for me?"

Winifred choked back a sob that tried to escape. "I will try," she said.

She brought a little stringed instrument that her mother loved, with which she sometimes accompanied her songs.

"What shall I sing?" she asked, seating herself beside the bed.

"I don't know," hesitated her mother.

"Would you like that little Scotch song from Sankey's book?"

"Oh, yes. That is very sweet."

So Winifred began the plaintive words:

"I am far frae my hame, an' I'm weary aftenwhiles
For the langed-for hame bringin' an' my Faither's welcome smiles."

She began with a stern watch upon her own emotions. But, as she proceeded, from the sadness of the hour rose a longing in her soul for the "ain countrie" where no blight of death and tears are known, and it poured itself out in the song. She sang two of the long stanzas.

"I've His guid word o' promise that some gladsome day the King
To His ain royal palace His banished hame will bring.
Wi' heart and wi' een rinnin' ower we shall see
The King in a' His beauty in oor ain countrie.
Like a bairn to its mither, a wee birdie to its nest,
I wad fain be agangin' noo unto my Saviour's breast;
For He gathers in His bosom witless, worthless lambs like me,
An' carries them Himsel' to His ain countrie."

Mrs. Gray had been lying with closed eyes through which the tears forced their way. Now she interrupted:

"What does it say, Winifred? 'He gathers in His bosom?' Please sing those lines again."

So Winifred repeated:

" 'For He gathers in His bosom witless, worthless lambs like me,
And carries them Himsel' to His ain countrie.' "

"Thank you!" murmured the invalid with a sigh. "Is it true, Winnie?"

"Yes, mother, it is quite true."

"That is what—I have been." She was speaking

again with difficulty, and her voice was very low, so that Winifred leaned forward to listen. "I've been—a 'witless, worthless lamb!' Will He—gather —me?"

"I know He will—if you trust Him!"

"How do you know, Winnie?"

"There is the Scripture, mother. There is the parable of the lost sheep, and then there is another word: 'All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'"

After a moment the weak voice spoke again:

"Winnie, *you* know Him; will you pray? Tell Him—I've taken—my own way;—a 'witless, worthless lamb!'"

Winifred slipped to her knees beside the bed and prayed; prayed with the greatest thankfulness she had ever known because she knew God, and prayed for the dearest object for which she had made request. She reminded God with great simplicity that He had laid the iniquity of us all who have wandered on His Anointed One, and begged Him to make good the virtue of that act to her poor mother. And the dying lady listened, and believed.

"Dear mother," said Winifred fondly, "do you not see that He will gather you?"

Mrs. Gray's head had sunk back contentedly in the pillows. She smiled faintly.

"Yes, I see it now," she said. "It is very true."

In a few moments she was asleep, and the nurse resumed her watch. But later in the night a quiet alarm summoned the little household to her chamber, and they watched for the moment of parting between the spirit and its fair tenement. Before it came she opened her eyes, and looked at them plac-

idly. Her lips moved, and Winifred bent forward eagerly to catch their words.

"I—am—not—afraid!" they pronounced, and then closed their witness for this world forever.

The death of Mrs. Gray brought the first great sorrow to the house of Robert Gray. It did its work in the heart of each who remained. It smote the husband with a conviction of misspent years, of a united fellowship in the things that perish so miserably instead of in those things which remain when all else is shaken. Had he but led his gentle wife, as was his opportunity, in ways of the Spirit, how different might have been their record together. And now the end had come for one, with no "abundant entrance," no glad prospect of long-anticipated joys,

> "Where the eye at last beholdeth
> What the heart has loved so long,"

but with the negative testimony of a fear relieved—of wrath averted, through the grace of a longsuffering God. They had been guilty together of the capital sin of an earth-centered life; and now the iron merchant, elder of the church though he was, awoke from his long dream of money getting and of earthly comfort to the reality of God, and of his obligation as a redeemed soul to Him. There crept an unfamiliar note of yearning sincerity into the prayers wherewith he took his heretofore formal part in the church prayer meeting, and it almost perceptibly thinned the frozen crust of the "icily regular" service. The men in his business noticed a new softness in his manner, and sometimes it emboldened them to speak to him of their own cares and sorrows, and they found sympathy.

Hubert grieved for his mother with the strength of an intense, reticent nature. But, as did also his sister, he found solace in God.

Winifred felt very keenly her mother's loss, missing the vanished hand from every part of the house where she now assumed her place, seeing everywhere reminders of her dainty touch and quiet taste, and longing for her voice yet more and more as the days went by. This great bereavement came so closely on the separation from one whom she never mentioned now, but who was far from forgotten, that often her heart seemed torn between the two sorrows. Sometimes waves of disheartenment came on cloudy days of testing, when the sun was hidden and life looked cheerless and hard. But anon the face of Jesus Christ broke through the clouds, and with the vision came always joy.

The three who were left drew more closely to each other, and despite their sorrow found a sweetness of comfort together never known before.

CHAPTER XV

"SELL THAT YE HAVE"

THREE years had passed, and the snows of winter had lain heavily for weeks upon all the region surrounding New Laodicea. It spread soft mantles over lawns and roofs in the city, and only in the streets was its white purity turned by the traffic of man into vileness. On a sharp, clear morning Hubert Gray walked through the cutting air toward his office, and meditated thus:

"What am I doing? What is the occupation that employs so much of my waking time and the powers that God has given me? 'Diligent in business,' the Scripture says. Yes, I am certainly that, but what is it all for? I am trading in iron, as my father has done, and laying up treasure on earth. That is something—the laying up treasure on earth—that the Lord Jesus said not to do. But did He really mean it? Nobody takes it very literally, I suppose.

" 'Sell that ye have and give alms.' That is what I read this morning. 'Make for yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.'

"How much does it mean? We cannot always press the words of the Lord to their utmost literal meaning. I suppose He used language a great deal as we do, to be taken at its face value, and not screwed and pressed and tortured into literal exactness until all the spirit is taken out of it? But these words sound very bald and unequivocal. I wish I knew what they

meant. Would I act on them if I did? There's the rub. It is undoubtedly hard for a man with money to look at the matter disinterestedly. And Jesus said, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!'

"But if a man wishes to know how to interpret these words, I suppose he may consider other words of the Lord and their evident interpretation and find a rule. For instance, He said, 'Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.' He evidently did not literally mean not to labor for daily bread, for that is something we are told to do. 'Work with your hands, that ye may . . . have need of nothing,' it says. And, 'If any will not work, neither let him eat'; and again, 'That with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.' So that is clear enough. Apparently what He meant was to emphasize the supreme need of the other kind of food—'the meat that endures unto everlasting life.' The one pales into such insignificance—into nothingness!—compared with the other, that He puts His hand over it—He puts it out of sight completely, and says, 'Look at this! This is the supreme thing, the one thing needful!' "

Hubert grew enthusiastic as he meditated the meaning of the text and the supreme need. He walked faster, and trod the snowy walk emphatically.

"What a splendid text!" he thought. "If I go to the mission to-night perhaps I shall speak from it. 'Labor not . . . but for'—ah! that word 'labor,' as applied in the second phrase needs explaining also, and Jesus did explain it. *'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'* That is 'labor' for the living bread—to believe on Him!"

But he returned to his former consideration. " 'Sell that ye have and give alms.' I wonder if the principle in the other text will apply to that? Did He mean, not literally that they were to sell all and give, but rather to emphasize the supreme importance of the treasure in heaven? Did He push aside one and bring forward the other, saying, 'Look at *this!* Let go the other, and lay hold of this. Lift up your eyes to the kingdom it is your Father's good pleasure to give you. Take stock in that. Little flock, you are so very rich yonder, you can afford to give up what you have here. Give to the poor that have no treasure here, and perhaps none yonder.' Ah, but my paraphrasing has not led me far from the literalness of the text! And how beautiful it is! That Man of Glory, 'Heir of all things,' poor for a little while for our sakes, counseling His little flock to follow for a brief season in the steps of His poverty, laying up more abundant treasure in His eternal kingdom!"

By this time Hubert had reached his place of business and was stumbling over the office boy in the hall. When alone in his office, at his desk, he leaned his head upon his hands and prayed:

"O Lord, teach me what those Scriptures mean that I may obey them. Save me from the bias of self-interest. Help me to live by the understanding I had with Thee at the outset of our walk together. What may I do to please Thee? My time and my energies are Thine, for I am bought with a price. Thou seest my possessions. What shall I do with them?"

He lifted his head with a lightened heart. "He will show me what to do," he thought.

That day at lunch Hubert propounded a question to his father.

"Father," said he, "what do you think Jesus meant by saying, 'Sell that ye have and give alms?' "

Mr. Gray reflected. "Hm!" he observed, "eh—well—" then, with a sly twinkle as though rather enjoying a coat that fitted tightly, "it doesn't sound very obscure, does it? The language is simple. What would you think it meant?"

"That is a point I am studying. If a man came to it without prejudice or self-interest, it would seem very simple, I imagine. But I am not sure that it should be pressed to absolute literalness. But, granted that it means *something,* was it of limited application, or would Christ say the same thing to His followers to-day?"

"Well," said Mr. Gray, whose theological studies had been greatly stimulated in recent months, and who had fallen into the hands of a variety of teachers, "you know some people draw pretty fine distinctions now-a-days. They may tell us that that does not belong to the church. I shouldn't wonder a bit if some of them would slip this over our heads and let it fall on some other people. But I should say, if you ask me, that such a principle, if it applied to anybody, might certainly to us; that if heavenly-mindedness could be enjoined upon any it might certainly upon those who are 'raised and seated with Christ in heavenly places.' "

"I think you are right, father. But now, just what *is* the principle—what is the true spirit of the text? In short, what are we *to do* about it?"

Mr. Gray looked at his son curiously before replying. Was it for the sake of *doing the word* that he pondered its meaning? To expound a text and to

act upon it were two separate things. The former was sometimes the pleasanter task. But he answered honestly:

"I suppose the true way to understand a Scripture is to read it in its relation to other Scripture—in the light of every other Scripture. I confess I have not so studied it. And," he added cautiously, "one must be very sure of the meaning of a word before he acts upon it."

"Certainly," said Hubert. Then he added privately that they had not waited to understand the text before proceeding to pile up treasure upon earth in abundance. "I intend to look up the subject," he said aloud, "and see what the Bible really does teach about it; that is, what the New Testament says. I suppose if we searched the Old Testament we should find earthly prosperity guaranteed the Lord's people on the ground of obedience. But we are under the new covenant, with heavenly riches assured."

"Just so—just so," murmured Mr. Gray.

The next morning the subject was renewed.

"I have found, father," said Hubert, "that the apostolic church did precisely what Jesus had told His flock to do. They sold what they had. It was an effect of the coming of the Holy Spirit. I suppose the heavens were so opened through that illumination that earthly possessions shriveled into nothingness by comparison. What precept alone could never have power to do the entrance of the Spirit did. It turned out the love of the world and 'the things that are in the world.' "

An enthusiastic light glowed in Hubert's face as he spoke. His father eyed him curiously as on the day before.

"Just so—just so," he replied absently.

Presently, however, he rallied to the discussion. "But, Hubert," he said, "do you remember what they did with the proceeds of their sales?"

"Yes," said Hubert, "they laid them at the feet of the Apostles, and distribution was made to the needs of all the company."

"That was not an indiscriminate alms-giving," said Mr. Gray.

"No," replied Hubert. "But the parting with their possessions of those who had property supplied the need of those who had none. That could be called alms-giving, I should think."

"That seemed to be confined to the church," said Mr. Gray meditatively.

"Yes," said Hubert, "and when a beggar solicited alms of Peter and John they had nothing to give him! No—I beg pardon—they had much to give him, through the 'riches in glory.' They gave him ability to make his own living, which was far better than an alms. But is there not some other Scripture that will tell us the relative positions of the church and the world to us in our giving?"

"I think so," said Mr. Gray. "How is this? 'As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.'"

"That is to the point," said Hubert.

"But to return to the Pentecostal precedent," said Mr. Gray; "if we were to sell out, at whose feet would you propose laying the proceeds?" He looked slyly at Hubert. "At Doctor Schoolman's?"

"Never," said Hubert, and then he laughed. "I beg the gentleman's pardon for my emphasis," he said, "but it never would occur to me to turn over my money to him."

Mr. Gray smiled. He felt that he had scored a good point against any rash procedure in the matter of possessions.

"At whose feet, then," he persisted, "would you think to lay it down?"

"There's the rub," said Hubert grimly.

"Ah, just so," said his father.

There was silence for a few moments and then Mr. Gray began again:

"Those early conditions at Jerusalem have never been reproduced since they were broken up by the scattering of the church, and I do not remember any hint in the Epistles to the Churches that there should be an effort to establish a similar communism in any place."

"No?" said Hubert. "I shall search farther and see what they do say."

And he did. A less disinterested disciple would not have pressed such a vigorous search toward an end that might mean his own monetary disadvantage. But a supreme longing to know the will of God and to do it was master of the situation. Moreover he remembered the vision of the cross that stood at the outset of his Christian way, and the terms of complete abandonment of himself and his circumstances to which he consented in his heart.

He pursued diligent and business-like methods in his study. With the aid of a concordance he found and tabulated what the Gospels had to say about "money," "gold," "silver," "goods," "riches" and "treasure," words that might serve as clews to discover the mind of God in the matter he searched out. Also he read carefully the Epistles to see what, in the more settled state of the church, was enjoined after the dissolving of the community at Jerusalem.

His thoughtful study involved the spare hours of many days, and he emerged from it with certain convictions which were not likely soon to be shaken. He set his arguments in order with a deliberation and logic with which a lawyer might prepare his brief. His leading conclusions as to the teaching of the Scriptures on the subject were somewhat as follows:

First, that the possession of riches is a disadvantage to a man as to his entering the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, that it would render it impossible but for the grace of God with whom all things are possible.

Second, that the teaching of the Lord Jesus placed the seeking of worldly goods in utter contempt and disregard as compared with heavenly riches. Indeed, they might well be abandoned for the sake of that treasure. That even the necessities of life were not the things to be anxiously sought, but were guaranteed by God in response to the diligent, first-in-order, whole-hearted seeking of His kingdom and righteousness. That this teaching, however, was guarded against misinterpretation by practical instructions in the Epistles to work for honest support and in order to have to give.

Third, that an instant effect of the coming of the Holy Spirit was a practical illustration of that disdain of earthly goods inculcated by the teaching of the Lord Jesus; and the result was not the want of any, for "neither was there among them any that lacked."

Fourth, that that striking example, set at the head of the age as an object-lesson for its entire course, was not literally followed by the Churches subse-

quently formed, but its principle was carried forward to them also, Paul enjoining an "equality," saying to the Corinthians, "Your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want; that there may be equality."

Fifth, that the giving up of possessions at Pentecost was spontaneous and voluntary, not forced; and the subsequent giving was to be not a legal necessity, but as the heart inclined. The flavor of delight to God would be lost if otherwise. The giving would have value in His eyes only as it was done, not of necessity, but cheerfully.

Hubert reviewed the articles of his newly formed financial creed, feeling that it was far from exhaustive, but that its principles must help to clear his vision as to the attitude a Christian man should take toward this world's gain. From the whole trend of the teaching he gathered that the true Gospel of Christ demanded a complete reversal of the generally accepted rudiments of worldly thrift, and that its key word for the use of money was not "get," but "give." Sometimes he hesitated and turned pale before a radical step which he found his heart prompting, and again he looked at the possessions now in his own right and was glad he had so much to place at the absolute disposal of the Lord he loved.

"It is not a necessity," he said. "I may do as I will. And I will to do that which will serve Him best."

He read the text, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." Tears, to which his eyes were

unused, made them glisten for a moment. "Ah, if through my poverty some might be made forever rich!" he thought.

How to put in practice what he desired to do became a problem. He went to his office with the sense of a new relationship to its business. A new Proprietor sat at the desk with him, and, afraid to act rashly, on Him he wisely waited for the clear instructions which should show how best His interests might be served.

The new Proprietor looked on him and saw a man triumphing where the multitude of essaying disciples fail: not in lofty ideals, not in emotional experiences, not in grand works undertaken; but in the prosiest, hardest spot—albeit the touchstone of many a man's consecration—the *money question.*

CHAPTER XVI

THE MISSIONARY MEETING

It was early summer when the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of Doctor Schoolman's church was to have a public meeting. On Sunday the faithful calendar announced it, and Doctor Schoolman made special mention of it, urging attendance. A missionary home on furlough was to exercise a part of his "well-earned rest" in addressing the meeting. It was to be held in the afternoon, but it was suggested that as many men of the congregation as possible unite with the ladies in giving welcome to one who had distinguished himself by faithful and valuable service on the foreign field.

The announcement was discussed in the Gray household and Hubert determined to join Winifred in attendance.

"Not that I believe much in it," he said, "when here all about us, and especially in our large cities, there are plenty of objects for our commiseration quite as wretched, undoubtedly, as those in foreign countries."

"No doubt," said Winifred. "It always seemed to me to be looking rather far afield for something to do."

However, the two determined to hear the voice from China.

Wednesday, the day for the meeting, came, and Hubert left work in time to join Winifred on her way. They found the lecture-room of the church

rather better filled than was usual at a missionary meeting, but only a few gentlemen were present. Winifred had time to observe some of the faces about her before the meeting began. She knew the Secretary, a woman with a keen, earnest face, always active in good works, and indefatigable in her efforts to excite a generally indifferent church into some glow of interest in the missionary cause. There were a few other faces as interested as her own. Hubert saw the plain little body he had singled out at the church social as one who perhaps would find it a pleasure to talk about the Lord. Her eyes looked expectantly toward the quiet looking man who came in with Doctor Schoolman.

The President, rather new to her office, fingered her jeweled watch-chain nervously as she opened the meeting. The company sang "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," and Doctor Schoolman offered prayer. The Secretary read the minutes of the previous meeting—a "Thank-offering meeting"—and it was discovered that the sum of $90 had been realized. The ladies exchanged glances of satisfaction at the amount.

"Hm-m! Their combined thanks foot up to that," thought Hubert. He was a business man and must be forgiven such a practical view of the case. "The Lord must be gratified!"

"I feel, ladies," said the President, pushing a diamond ring up and down upon her finger anxiously, "very much pleased that our poor gifts have amounted to so much. We cannot all do what we would, but we may give our mites, and together they will count for something in the work. We cannot tell what these ninetv dollars may mean to the heathen."

"Their mites!" thought Hubert, with something

of his old-time irony. He was freshly instructed on the subject of money, and knew well the story of the widows' mites. "If Mrs. Greenman herself had given the ninety dollars, I should think she was beginning to feel a tinge of gratitude for something."

Winifred had fastened her brown eyes musingly upon the President. She was wondering if money might express thanks, and, if so, how much would appropriately suggest her own gratitude to God for His "unspeakable gift."

"No gift would be large enough," she thought, and then the familiar lines came to her mind:

> "Were the whole realm of nature mine,
> That were a present far too small;
> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my soul, my life, my all."

"How true that is," she thought. "But I suppose it is nice to give some token, even though one cannot adequately express one's thanks."

There were some other reports and then the leading alto from the choir sang:

> "There is a green hill far away."

"I am sure we are all glad," said the President, "to have with us Mr. Hugh Carew from China, who has labored for years among the heathen there. We shall be pleased to hear him tell us something of his work."

And Mr. Hugh Carew began. He was a man uninteresting to look upon, save that his face wore a certain indefinable expression of a man who has been a stranger in many places; a man habituated to loneliness and to silence. But he was evidently a man

also accustomed to speak, for he addressed his audience with easy grace.

"The pleasure is mine," he said, "in being able to present to your interest and sympathy the dearest object of the heart of God."

Hubert started to hear the man's work, as he thought, thus spoken of. Mr. Carew went on:

"Of course I refer not to my simple share in it, but to God's great work of salvation in all lands."

"Ah, that is what he means," thought Hubert, and repeated to himself—"the dearest object of God's heart!"

"You may question my definition of that work," said Mr. Carew, "but a moment's reflection will convince you that it is true. We may measure the object's value by the price expended for it. For what other than the dearest object would God have been willing to give His most priceless treasure—the Son of His love? You will pardon my giving some attention to the fundamental facts of our common salvation before speaking specifically of the work in which I have had a part for some years in China. My apology is this: that wherever the returned missionary goes, even among God's people, he finds himself obliged to defend his work to some who regard it as an impractical and self-devised effort at doing good, rather than the simple carrying out of the expressed will of God. We have to go back to first principles and inquire afresh: *"What is the will of God?"*

"That sounds sensible," thought Hubert, who loved to hear vital principles discussed.

"Some very simple, well-worn texts will serve for our brief study," said Mr. Carew. "First there is that comprehensive passage, familiarly known and

quoted in all evangelical circles: *'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'* The words that I wish to emphasize especially are two:—*'the world.'* They show you the scope of God's love and gift. He loved 'the world,' not some favored race within it. And love, which cannot rest inactive, *gave;* gave according to its own measure—'His only begotten Son.' We cannot be otherwise than agreed that this love and this gift were for all, and so must include my poor China. Indeed, could you divide God's love arithmetically (it is a foolish way to put it—you cannot divide infinity!) then my friends over there might claim about one-fifth of it, I suppose, as they number about that proportion of the world's population."

The ladies smiled indulgently at the curious way of putting it, but were not yet persuaded in their hearts that so considerable a portion of the love of God could be diverted from their own delightfully engrossing race, not to China alone, but to other peoples also, as would follow by that kind of arithmetic. Let the missionary talk. It would still be as obvious to their consciousness as the glittering pompon on Mrs. Greenman's bonnet that themselves were the consistent and natural monopolists of the favor of their Creator!

But Mr. Carew went on: "We may find our two very illuminating little words in another text almost equally familiar. It is this: *'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.'* This lets us farther into God's attitude and purpose concerning 'the world.' Loving all His creatures, He still saw that they were involved in ruin brought on by sin. If He brought them to Himself—the only

event that could satisfy love—it must be by a great and costly Redemption. One emanating from Himself must be projected into the ruin and death of the world and come back to Him, spotless and unsullied, bringing with Him 'many sons' unto the glory. But He must purge their sins. So He gave Him to be a Lamb of sacrifice; that He taking the sins of the world upon Him, might work in Himself a death unto sin that should be made good to all that become united to Him. Potentially, then, the sin of *'the world'* is taken away. If we wish to support further this point in our study concerning 'the world' we may turn to Paul and hear, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' Or the Apostle John will tell us that 'He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world.*'

"Now that we have reminded ourselves of the love, and of the gift embracing redemption, it occurs to us to ask how are our poor brothers in China to avail themselves of the gift or to hear of the love. Another well-known text, containing our two words again, tells us very clearly. It offers the only logical answer to the question, and it is this: *'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.'* Love has devised its gift and prepared it at unspeakable cost, and now commands our feet that we may bear it to all habitable parts of the earth. Wherever the objects of God's love are, there the gift must be borne. Do we not all see that the work which we call 'Foreign Missions' is in the direct, simple carrying out of the purpose of God, bearing the knowledge of the gift to all for whom it is intended, that they may avail themselves of it?

What object could be dearer to the heart of God? What He has Himself done shows us of what moment the matter is to Him. How can we ever excuse ourselves that it has been a matter of such indifference to us? He has limited Himself to human instruments for the carrying to the lips of dying ones whom He loves the water from the smitten Rock, and how have we responded? Are we indeed His sons and daughters, that His supreme wish should be our last concern?"

The speaker's eyes had deepened in color as he spoke. Now they burned with intense feeling. His long, tenacious hands were clenched repressively. He went on:

"I imagine I hear an objection that the same work is being done at home, and that there is ample field here still. We may not trust our own understanding to argue the case as to the value of confining our efforts to the home field, but let the Scriptures, always ready to instruct us, give us light. Probably we will agree that Paul, the apostle-missionary, is in his life an exponent of the theory of Gospel preaching. He had an ambition. Hear how he expresses it: 'Yea, being ambitious so to preach the Gospel, *not where Christ was already named,* that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but, as it is written

> "'They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came,
> And they who have not heard shall understand.'"

"He shows his Roman readers his method; telling them that from Jerusalem unto Illyricum (just across the Adriatic Sea from Italy) he had 'fully preached the Gospel of Christ.' Now he was ready to look farther, his task to those regions being accomplished.

What did he mean? Was he leaving behind him converted areas, whose every inhabitant magnified God in Christ Jesus? Far from it. 'Fully preached' though he had, communities were still heathen, but for the lights that he had kindled from place to place in his persecuted journeyings. Remembering that he is in his life the model for Gospel preaching, as he is in his writings the messenger of Christian doctrine, must we not see that the Gospel is for *broadcast sowing,* not for close gardening, save by the careful hands that God will raise up in the wake of the evangelist. Or, to use another figure, it is the *notification, to lost heirs,* of a fortune bequeathed them; and the responsibility of the ones entrusted with the carrying out of the will is not so much to persuade heirs to receive their inheritance as to notify them of it. So the Apostle preached 'not where Christ was named,' having a zeal to discharge his debtorship of making known to all nations God's gift of grace. Now over into Spain—far, far afield, as distances then were gauged—the eager eyes of the Apostle looked and longed for a crown of rejoicing from that land also in the day of Christ. In him we see the faithful exposition of the missionary idea."

By this time Hubert was looking at the speaker very intently, with widened, almost startled, eyes that were opening to a new idea. Winifred also sat with riveted gaze, her cheeks slightly paling beneath the deepening conviction of a tremendous truth. True worshiper that she was, to know the truth must be to shape her life in consonance with it, and a voice at her heart gave warning that to be conformed to this newly revealed will of God would be pain. But where was the theory that had seemed so clear and

sensible to both Hubert and herself when they came to the meeting? Hubert always had clear ideas. What would he say to this? Now Mr. Carew was saying:

"I have frequently heard it objected to foreign missions that there are works of philanthropy still to be done here. The objection is absolutely irrelevant. The work of missions is not an indefinite 'doing good.' It is the bearing of a *specific good* to those who have not received it. It is not, *per se,* the bettering of temporal conditions. It is the securing to those who believe its message the *best eternal conditions.* It is not a matter of 'elevation'—it is a matter of translation. Not into a bettered life, but into a *new* life with an eternal outlook—into a new realm altogether, and that divine—the Gospel we carry ushers its believers! How would the poor, irrelevant argument I have quoted have affected Paul? Looking across the sea to Spain, and to Rome by the way, he was leaving behind him in Judea, in Asia—in all the region unto Illyricum, hungry people still unfed and the naked still unclothed. Want and misery still stretched out their hands to be relieved. But they could not stay the feet of the Apostle. He had heard *the supreme call!* God had a supreme gift to bestow; the world had a supreme need; and to bring the need and the gift together was his absorbing, constraining zeal. Would God it were ours also! Friends, my plea for China is not for its temporal needs; it is not that its women's feet are bound, that its men are opium-stupefied, or that it needs our Western ideas, as it is waking from its Eastern way. It is this: *God has an unspeakable gift for its people, and we must bear it to them.*"

His tall figure was leaning forward and his burn-

ing eyes chanced to rest fully upon Hubert. The latter started, and a half audible groan burst from his lips. Was it the burden of a new motive, or the sudden smiting of a chord he knew right well? The "unspeakable gift!" Yes, he knew it; and its glory was ineffably beyond the highest earthly good he had known. Happy the man under commission to bear such a treasure, though it be to the uttermost parts of the earth! And the great Giver longed to bestow it on the millions of His creatures, but waited the unwilling feet of His messengers! It was heart-breaking! But was there no other way? Why should an infinite God limit Himself to finite man in carrying out His great design? Mr. Carew continued:

"You may ask why does God restrict Himself to the human instrument in bearing the tidings, and *through the tidings the effective result,* of the Redemption? I cannot tell you why, but I see that it is so. A light from heaven may overpower a Saul of Tarsus, and he may hear words straight from the ascended Christ. But a Christian *man*—Ananias—must be sent to tell him how to wash away his sins, and to minister the Holy Spirit to him. An angel may communicate with Cornelius, the Centurion, but he stays his lips from uttering the Gospel of Christ. That privilege is reserved for the *human* lips of Peter. Is it not sufficient that the Commander has said, 'Go *ye'?* Had the task been set for angels, it would have been accomplished long since, for *they* do His pleasure. But He trusted it to us, who might be expected to be so bound by ties of gratitude to His will that we would eagerly spring to do His bidding. And we have miserably failed. 'Is there not another way?' we languidly ask in the face of the command.

I do not see another way. But the Lord has most clearly outlined *this* way: *That the Gospel should be preached in all the world to every creature, and that the one who believes and is baptized should be saved.* To sit and philosophically consider that an infinite God must surely find some other way if we fail in this, is not reverence for His wisdom. It is mutiny."

Some of the ladies looked startled at this bold setting forth of the case, and remembered how, privately, they had given voice to the sentiments under criticism before coming to the meeting. The Secretary's keen face betrayed thorough assent to what the speaker was saying, and the President was glad that she held such a relation as she did to a cause so evidently right, with a reverse side so evidently wrong. The plain little body of the Church Social beamed thorough sympathy.

"Do you say," continued Mr. Carew, "that God will be merciful to the heathen because of their ignorance? I believe He will, and do not doubt that it will be 'more tolerable' for those who have never heard than for those in this country (heathen also, in the Scriptural sense) who, having often heard, are still rejectors of the Gospel. But there is a greater question involved than that of lessened stripes or mitigated woe. Do you say that men will be *saved* by lack of knowledge? The prophet said his people *perished* for lack of it! Ah, if God had ordained ignorance to be the way of salvation He might have spared Himself great cost!—cost of the redemption sacrifice, and of its proclamation, often in martyr blood. But He confers His boon to faith and 'faith cometh by *hearing*.'

"You say it will increase the responsibility of the

heathen if they hear, and put them in worse case if they reject the message? Very true. But had that been a sufficient reason it would have silenced our Lord's 'Go ye' at the outset of the age. Never would the Gospel have traveled to our barbaric fathers, and we should be without hope to-day. But the treasure was too great which the Saviour sought. No thought of deeper shadows cast by the very brightness of the light could deter Him from holding it forth. Beyond all cost of difficulty, danger, or the deepened condemnation of the lost, was the value of the Church He sought—the pearl of great price for which all other possessions might be forfeited! Ah, friends, since the object is so dear to Him, where are our hearts that we think of it so coldly! The burden of my plea is *for Him;* not for the missionary, not for philanthropy, not even so much for the heathen themselves, as *for Him,* because He loves and longs to give but lacks the human vessels through which to give!"

The speaker paused, and absently pushed back the hair from his flushed forehead. An almost tragic yearning shone in his deepset eyes. There was one in the congregation whose heart burned in a fellowship of grief over the Saviour's unmet longing. Mr. Carew continued more slowly, in a voice intensely sad and almost broken:

"Do you sometimes quote softly for *your* comfort, 'I will guide thee with mine eye'? You have thought of His eye upon you—and that is right—to care for, protect and lead. But have you ever watched the glance of His eye with another thought, not for yourself, but *for Him?* Not to see in it provision and help for you; but to see to what He is looking, for what He is longing—what it is that will give joy to Him? When I look in His eyes," and the speaker

was looking far away from his congregation and spoke as though half forgetting them, "I seem to hear Him saying, 'I have other sheep—*I must bring them!*'"

His voice sank to a whisper. Hubert felt a little convulsive movement beside him and Winifred's hand was shading her eyes. Mr. Carew recovered from the emotion that nearly mastered him, and remembered his hearers and their probable wishes. He began again:

"But perhaps I am neglecting to tell you that which you came especially to hear—some details concerning the actual work of God in China. You will pardon me, but I cannot forbear speaking wherever I go concerning the principles underlying our work, as well as of the work itself. One might describe the people and their ways—and all that is valuable in making them more real to us—and might present a score of curious things which would perhaps beguile an hour very pleasantly, but still leave an indifferent heart unchanged as to the real motive of missions. However, all that I have said will gain and not lose by our turning attention for a time to the practical outworking of the theory."

Then the speaker gave illustrations of the way lost souls are found in China. Very pathetic were some of the incidents, and again and again Winifred's eyes were dim, and an unspeakable pain gnawed at Hubert's heart. Fervently he thanked God for those whose darkness He had turned to light, but sad beyond expression seemed the repeated instances which had occurred in Mr. Carew's experience of earnest pleadings for missionaries to be sent to various places and his absolute inability to answer the cry. But broader than the fact of the *wish* of some stood the

need of all! Populous cities without one witness to the grace of God! Wide regions untraversed by the feet of His messengers! Hubert had thought New Laodicea a place of desperate need; and so it was in the matter of vital, fruit-bearing piety. But as he thought of the inky darkness in which China's millions dwelt this seemed a place of light.

The meeting came to an end. But first the President expressed the thanks of those who had listened to the lecture, and hoped all had been stirred to greater zeal and effort for the future in helping so good a cause. She suggested that the mite-boxes should be redistributed.

"'Mite-boxes!'" thought Hubert and squirmed in his seat impatiently. Then an inward voice reproved him for his contempt of small things. He thought of the poor that might deposit from time to time small coins that meant much from their slender incomes. Yes, "mites" were all right, if they were like the "widow's," and not the meager drippings from a selfish superfluity. But suppose *he* take a mite-box? How many of them would be required to hold the hoarded, unnecessary, unused wealth at his command? He could not insult the Lord and the "dearest object of His heart" by an offering unworthy of his resources.

There was a pleasant buzz of voices at the close of the meeting and nobody seemed to be going. Doctor Schoolman was shaking hands with Mr. Carew. Doors were opened into the parlor and there was the fragrant odor of a collation prepared. For the benevolences of New Laodicea were not unlike certain reluctant pumps that will give nothing until they have been given to. To whet an interest in such meetings as this, and to cajole small sums

from unwilling purses, it was found necessary to make a gastronomic appeal.

Hubert and Winifred moved forward to personally express to the lecturer their appreciation of his words. Doctor Schoolman greeted them warmly and introduced them to him. Mr. Carew had noticed the two among his hearers, and looked at them now with an unconsciously appealing glance. His face was still flushed and the hand Hubert took was hot.

"You are not well," said the latter involuntarily.

"No," said Mr. Carew, rather absently, "I suppose not."

"I should not think this work you are doing would tend to recovery?"

"No, perhaps not," said the missionary.

Hubert looked at him inquiringly. "Then why do you do it?" he wished to ask, but refrained.

Mr. Carew answered his questioning look.

"I am not to be pitied," he said with a smile, "even if I should not recover as I hope to do. Some men are sick and die for pure folly's sake, or for business. They are to be pitied. But if it were given a man to be spent for Christ's sake—to know some faint shadow of suffering for the same cause for which *He* suffered as we never may—that man is happy, I think."

"He is," said Hubert earnestly, "he is."

Mr. Carew was struck by the sincerity of Hubert's tones. He looked at him with a searching, yearning expression; somewhat, it may be, as the Lord Jesus looked on the rich young man and "loved him." Would this one stand the test of love's requirement?

Some ladies were taking Winifred away to the parlors for refreshments, and someone invited Mr. Carew and Hubert also. They both accepted with

the mutual wish to prolong the conversation. As they ate they talked of the Living Bread which must be borne to men.

In the course of their conversation Hubert confessed: "You will be astonished, but I have never before seen the matter as you presented it to-day, and yet I have been a Christian for three years."

"A good many men have been Christians for many years, and yet have not come to see the true motive of missions," said Mr. Carew. "It is singuar how the most fundamental principles may be most ignored; I suppose somewhat as a man thinks less of the foundation stones of his house than of what he finds inside it. But in spite of this if a man has really a heart for God, when the matter is clearly presented to him he responds to it. God's purpose must find an 'amen' in his heart."

"That is true," said Hubert.

Presently they left the parlor, still talking together earnestly of God's will, and inadvertently drifted into the great auditorium. Mr. Carew glanced about at its finished elegance.

"Perhaps," he said to Hubert, "they think *this* instead, is doing the will of God. I daresay they have read that the house Solomon builds for God must be 'exceeding magnifical,' and they think so must this be. And, indeed, the spiritual antitype of that house must be beautiful! It 'groweth into a holy temple in the Lord.' And the work of missions is gathering its 'living stones.' But *this*—the New Testament breathes no word of instruction concerning this material house! Ah, if I were to write a general confession for our church I should say: 'We have left undone the things we were told to do, and we

have done the things we were not told to do, and there is very little health in us!' ''

Hubert smiled at Mr. Carew's words, but felt their force. He ventured to remark: ''This building does not look as though there were lack of money among us.''

''Oh, no!'' said Mr. Carew. ''Oh, no!'' He repressed his lips, as though fearing to say more than would be courteous. But presently he spoke again in general terms.

''The church at home,'' he said, ''has largely forgotten her pilgrim character. She has put off her sandals, and loosened her robes for luxurious living instead of girding them for service and pilgrimage. As to display and indulgence at home, she says plainly, 'I am rich,' but as to the carrying out the will of God entrusted to her for the world, she is pitifully poor.''

They were emerging from the stately auditorium, and Hubert bethought him to look for Winifred. They met her in one of the rooms with Mrs. Greenman.

''Oh, Mr. Carew,'' said the latter, ''I was looking for you. Our ladies appreciate so very much your talk to us! I hope—''

Winifred and Hubert were now speaking together and did not hear more of the President's remarks. But before they left the place Hubert had sought Mr. Carew again and had asked him to call at his office the following day.

''I should like to talk with you further concerning your business,'' he said.

He used the word ''business'' absent-mindedly, and Mr. Carew smiled, not at all illy pleased with it. Hubert was thinking of an investment.

CHAPTER XVII

LET THE DEAD BURY THEIR DEAD

WINIFRED and Hubert walked a part of the way home in silence. At length the former spoke.

"It seems to me we have been rather blind concerning the object of missions," she said. "What do you think of it now, Hubert?"

"I am convinced that I have taken a very shallow view of it," Hubert replied. "It is a marvel to me now that I could have missed so completely the true motive of missions. It is as clear as daylight in the Bible. It is humiliating to think one has been so contentedly provincial in thoughts of God's salvation. I am ashamed of it."

"So am I," agreed Winifred, and then they walked on in silence. An uneasy thought was gnawing at her heart that hardly found expression. Had it been put in words it would have been something like this:

"How are we *to act* with reference to new light on the will of God? If Hubert and I are really His children, called into His fellowship, then we must be sympathetic with His wish and do what we can to forward it. What would that be?"

Soon they reached the door of their home. Home! What a pleasant word it is. How easily the accustomed key turned in the latch, and how familiarly the house belongings greeted them as they entered. Ay, "there's no place like home," and its cords wind

themselves about us silently, certainly, until it seems almost a sacrilege to think of leaving it.

Hubert went at once to his room, to the spot where questions were wont to be settled, and when dinner was announced he begged to be excused.

Winifred and her father sat alone at the table. He inquired concerning the missionary meeting, and she rehearsed to him much of what Mr. Carew had said.

"Ah, very good—very good," Mr. Gray said. "Very conclusive, I should think."

But it did not occur to him how a conclusive argument and a life action might stand related. Theories cost nothing when only the mind assents to them. But wrought in the heart, they mold lives after them.

In Hubert's room a painful heart process was going on. Sunk in a deep, capacious chair, with head resting upon his hand, he set in order before himself the axiomatic truths he had heard.

"God's supreme work is salvation," he meditated. "The field for this work is the world—the whole world. Salvation is wrought—as to man's part—through faith in a message preached. The message requires a messenger. In vast proportions of the field the messengers are wanting. What should be done about it? Clearly, the messengers should rally at the command of God. But it must be at His command. Men cannot go self-sent."

This thought gave a brief respite to the haunting sense of a responsibility.

"*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" The double questions heard by Isaiah in the temple repeated itself now in Hubert's mind.

"There are two questions there," he said. "'Whom shall *I send,* and *who will go* for us?' A

man can only answer, finally, the second. God must answer His own first query,—although Isaiah did suggest, 'send me.' Must not any loyal child *if he hear* his Father's appeal say, 'Here am I'?"

Hubert's head sank lower upon his hand.

"Have I heard the voice of His need?" he asked, but hesitated to answer his own question. "Yes," he said finally, aloud, in a strained voice, "I have heard. I can never un-hear His words. I may disregard them, make myself forget them, but I can never go back to the place of twelve hours ago and be as though I had never known His mind. I have been in His temple—I, a worshiper purged by His infinite grace; I have seen a vision of His will, and have heard the voice of His need. I can never undo the fact."

Lines that somebody had written repeated themselves in his mind:

> "Light obeyed increaseth light;
> Light rejected bringeth night.
> Who shall give me power to choose,
> If the love of light I lose?"

Why did he still hesitate? Why did his "here am I" linger for hours unsaid? A sense of the reality of present things and of home surroundings swept over him. These were the possible things. But those—? He shuddered. Dim, misty, in a veil of unreality lay China, a distant land. What relation had he with it? There were missionaries, a strange, separated, unusual folk, specially created for the purpose, no doubt; but *he,* a practical, everyday, intensely real sort of being—what had he to do with things so far away? Oh, no! It was not for him. Let him put aside the overwrought fancies of the day, and return to practical life again.

He almost rose from his seat as though to emphasize his sober thought, but an impression restrained him.

"And so I lose My witnesses!" he imagined his Lord saying with grief. "They are walking by sight and not by faith, and the seen, tangible things hold them. Who will stretch out his hands to lay hold upon the things of eternal life?"

Hubert sank in rebuked silence under the spell of the afternoon's disclosure. It was reality, if he were a Christian. It must be faced. But how the seen things wrestled with the heavenly vision! Habit, long association, and tender love mingled a cup of sacrifice that he must drink. Could he leave all these for the sake of the joyful message of his Lord?

Now imagination pictured the leavetaking. How the familiar scenes of his home and native city remonstrated with his choice! In fancy he wrung for the last time his father's hand; he bade one last farewell to the flower-dressed grave of his gentle mother; and—and *Winifred!*

A dry, tearless sob shook him. O sweet sister, loved most of all since the days when, her jealous-eyed protector, he walked beside her to the school, shared sturdily but keenly her childish woes and fought all battles for her! Loved now with a closer, spiritual tie in their mutual devotion to their blessed Lord! How could he give her up? How could he leave her undefended now by his watchful love?

The scene of three years ago when he handed the sword of his self-served and self-defended life to Jesus Christ, and purposed in His heart to follow Him at any cost, was vividly rehearsed in his memory. Possessions, home, kindred, all things, were nominated in the bond of the whole-hearted sur-

render to his Lord. The time had come to hold to those honest terms.

Hubert rose from his seat with a pale face, and a death-like sinking at his heart. "Yes, Lord Jesus," he uttered with dry lips, "I am at Thy command. Forgive my coward halting. If Thou wilt send me, I will go."

On the other side of the hall, in her pretty room, Winifred had prayed: "We have seen the glance of Thine eye, O Lord, and know Thy longing. Open our eyes to see how we may serve Thee, and strengthen our hearts to bear—nay, to love!—Thy will. If we must give each other up"—a long pause, broken by storms of weeping, intervened—"then let us see—oh, *let us see Thy face!*"

When Winifred and Hubert first met in the hall next morning some gleams of comfort had already stolen into both their hearts. He put his arm about her as they descended the stairs together, and at the foot they paused.

"Dear little sister!" he said caressingly.

Her eyes filled at his unusual tenderness; for Hubert's love, however fervent and well believed-in, was not demonstrative. She looked up in his face with a long, serious question. He answered it by asking:

"Shall I go?—for Him, Winnie?"

"Yes, Hubert," she said earnestly, "oh, yes!" But the color flickered in her cheeks and her lips grew white.

They stood for a moment together but neither spoke. Together they presented afresh their offering to God, and He knew that it was costly.

At breakfast neither spoke of the matter that was

uppermost in their hearts. But later Hubert sought his father in the library and made known to him the step he had taken.

Grief, dismay, and almost anger, struggled in the older man's heart. He looked at his son with sorrowful sternness.

"Then—then, Hubert," he said very slowly, "you have concluded to leave me."

A pang shot through Hubert's heart, keener than any thought of his own pain, but he answered steadily:

"I have concluded, father, to follow Christ."

Mr. Gray frowned. He was not conscious of frowning at the name of Christ, or at so pure a sentiment as that uttered, but grief made him insensible to what he did.

"And is that," he asked with some irony, "the only way you can find of following Him? Can no one follow Him at home?"

"I do not see that he can if he is called abroad, father."

"And are you called?" he asked sharply, still the pain at his heart dulling any sense of shame that he could speak unsympathetically of such a thing.

Hubert answered gently.

"I believe I am, father," he said.

Mr. Gray stared at his son silently. His face grew ashen and the hand upon the table before him trembled visibly. Hubert stood in an agony of mute sympathy. At last the father rose without a word and prepared to leave the room. His face looked older by a decade than an hour before. Hubert made a movement to detain him and opened his lips to speak; but the other waved him aside with a quick gesture of the trembling hand. And so they parted.

Hubert looked after his father with a breaking heart. He had thought the crisis of his grief was passed when alone in his room he wrestled out the problem for his own heart. But now a heavier weight rested upon his soul. Must he break his father's heart? Must the hope of happy comradeship in future years be put aside, and with the disappointment his father age and weaken irrecoverably? He saw him walk down the path slowly and heavily, and a feeling of awful guilt swept over him. Was he his father's murderer? Was he following a delusion that would make himself an exile and lay his father prematurely in his grave? The thought overpowered him. He sank helplessly in a chair and groaned out his burden to the Lord.

"O Lord," he prayed, "am I walking in Thy footsteps, or am I a deluded wretch, bringing sorrow, and it may be death, to those I love most?" He paused, and his head sank deeply. "Lord, this is grief," he groaned. "This is grief. I have not known it before."

And so it seemed. Thoughts of his own loneliness and possible hardships seemed light compared with this.

"Grief!" he repeated, as though he found relief in the pitiful uttering of the word whose depths he was sounding. Then memory framed a passage which held the same word. "A man of sorrows," it repeated, "and *acquainted with grief!*"

How sweet the words sounded! And how dear the imagined face of Him of whom they were spoken!

"Tell me of Thy grief," he whispered. "Didst Thou cause grief?"

Words of Scripture again came to his help.

"Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul," he heard Simeon say to the mother of his Lord, and it dawned upon him that when Jesus faced the cross with its agony He must have felt through His tenderest of hearts the sword-piercing of His Mother's sorrow. Ah, yes! He caused grief. And as He took His own way to the cross He raised a standard for those who follow of pitiless separations and of broken ties, if need be, for His kingdom's sake. *"If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."*

Texts that Hubert had passed lightly before were now illuminated with meaning and power as the occasion rose for them to be translated into life. He found a rare sweetness of comfort in those which assured him that he need not fear he was out of the path of the Saviour's footprints, though he found them blood-marked or washed with many tears. He turned to some familiar words which he wished to see before him again in plain black and white. They were found toward the end of the ninth chapter of Luke.

"Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," said one in response to his Lord's "follow me." And said Jesus, *"Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."*

"Let the dead bury their dead!" What a strange expression, and what could it mean! Hubert pondered the text, no longer in keen agony of mind, for his distress had lightened as he saw even on the painful way the light of God's will shining. Anything could be borne, if the face of the Lord still shone upon it!

"What does it mean?" he queried in deep meditation.

Slowly a meaning, not the full one, doubtless, but suited to his need, dawned upon him. Let the spiritually dead attend to the affairs of death. Let them follow the conventional, natural round, and answer always to the cries of human love and longing. Let them keep to earthly ties and earthly work. But let the living be about the affairs of life! A ministry waits that only living hands can serve. Let filial hearts render unto earthly love that which is due, but see that *thou*, child of God, render also unto God the things which are God's.

"There are a thousand things," thought Hubert, "that unregenerated men can do quite as well as any. Indeed, they have an affinity with earthly things that is lacking in the heaven-born man. To trade in iron and amass wealth does not require a *living* man. I will let others do it. The supreme business of my Father calls, and I must be about it. But my earthly father? Shall I wait first to bury him? The Lord says, No."

Hubert studied his pattern in His life as well as words.

"He was subject to His parents," he reflected, "until the time came for His ministry and He had reached mature years of responsibility. Then, when He had entered upon His task, not even His mother's voice could turn Him from it. When His friends thought Him beside Himself, and she with them sought to take Him away from His work, He said, 'Who is My mother? . . . Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother.' But He still was not unfilial. When not even the thought of the sword through her heart

could take Him from the cross, He made provision for her, commending her to John's faithful love."

Hubert's eyes grew soft again with thoughts of his father. There was no need to think of provision for him, for he had enough. But he longed to give him always the joy of a son's tender love and companionship. Still the supreme call was inexorable, and another Father's business demanded filial fellowship.

"Thou must care for him, Lord," he said, and with a sudden impulse he knelt beside the library table and prayed that God would take away all the sting of his father's grief, and give him joy instead; joy in fellowship with the great Father in His giving.

After prayer he was much relieved and went to his work as usual, admitting to his office soon after his arrival Mr. Carew, who called in response to his wish of the day before. Hubert had more to offer than the financial gift contemplated.

John 19:25-27

CHAPTER XVIII

GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY

A HEAVY cloud hung over the house for days. Mr. Gray was silent and sad. All attempts to renew the conversation of that painful Thursday morning were waived aside. Hubert was at a loss to know how to proceed with his project, but he and Winifred gave themselves to diligent prayer. As to the latter, sharp as was her grief at the thought of parting with her brother, her love for God was stronger, and she did not hesitate for a moment in her consent that he should go.

"I do not know any other answer to give to God," she said. "Surely I have nothing too precious for Him, when He has given all to me. And you know," she said with a radiant smile, "Hubert and I can never lose each other! We cannot lose what is in Christ!"

She made these remarks to Adèle Forrester, to whom the matter of Hubert's call to foreign service was communicated. Her friend listened very quietly.

Adèle had been steadily growing in God's grace since the day when His way of salvation dawned so brightly upon her. She was the same merry-hearted young woman as before, but a certain womanly sweetness, never really lacking beneath the gay exterior, developed in ever-increasing winsomeness. A capacity for intense enjoyment found new sources for its filling in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and

she pursued faithfully and happily the ways she saw of serving Him. To-day she received Winifred's news with evident sympathy, but with a reserve of feeling not expressed.

"Our Bishop preached a splendid missionary sermon two weeks ago," she remarked. "He made things very plain indeed. I think we all felt that we had been almost traitors in not rallying to the Lord's standard better than we had done. Even Dick paid some attention, for he said after church—you know what a tease he is—'*now* I hope you see where you ought to be!'"

"Oh, Adèle," said Winifred, "I haven't thought to ask you in months how the choir is getting along. The mention of Dick reminds me. Do you still enjoy your singing?"

Adèle laughed. "My 'occupation's gone,'" she said. "We are supplanted by a boy choir. The present minister likes that better. A saucy little fellow who brings our evening paper and fights his business competitors once in a while is one of our successors. He looks quite cherubic in a surplice."

"And you?"

"I sing praises in the congregation, and what is left over I sometimes offer in the mission."

"So you still keep up your service at the mission?"

"Oh, yes!"

Adèle did not add how much appreciated were those services, nor how she had added visitation amongst the families represented at the mission to the evident blessing of not a few.

Their conversation drifted back to the subject of Hubert's leaving, and Adèle entered a compact of

prayer for the right development of all things relating to it.

Gradually the Spirit of God wrought in the heart of Robert Gray. He was led to think of the darkness of unbelief out of which his son had been brought, and to consider how fitting a thing it was that a life thus renewed should be held at the command of God. But it was hard to think of him as a foreign missionary! Mr. Gray had believed theoretically in the cause of missions and had given a yearly subscription to the society representing it. But to give his son—ah, that was a different matter! At the first shock of the thought he had recoiled, and a naturally stubborn heart kept the question at bay for a time. But he could not long fight with God. The fellowship lost while he steeled his heart against the unwelcome demand was too great a price to pay. Gradually it came to him that the greater weight that bowed his soul and took the joyous spring from life was not Hubert's proposed leaving, but the hiding of God's face.

"In thy favor is life," he prayed. "Any bereavement would be better than for Thee to hide Thy face from me."

And the Face shone out again as his softened will loosened its tenacious grip of that it held. But still he was a man of strong opinions, and slow to be convinced that his clear-headed, business-like son was the one to follow the still hazy-seeming, far-off life of a missionary.

It was a happy day when the ban was lifted from the subject and Hubert was free to discuss it with his father and arrange business matters for a separation. A new element in the matter taxed the sympathy of the hard-headed business man, when

it became apparent that his hitherto practical son intended not only withdrawing his active partnership from the firm of Robert Gray & Son, but to sell his interest in the concern, liberating the proceeds for the use of God.

"What folly!" said the elder man frankly.

"Do you remember our discussion of the Scripture about it?" replied Hubert, smiling. "I think I submitted to you the conclusions drawn from a study concerning it. I might as well act upon my convictions, or I shall lose them. You know what James says about the 'hearers only' of the word?"

"Yes, I know what he says," said his father a little testily. "But about this money question there must be a sensible middle course somewhere between a fanatical giving away everything you have and a close-fisted holding on to it all. Give to the Lord of your first fruits, certainly. That is a good thing. But a man ought to look out for himself."

"Yes," said Hubert, "I believe there is a rational course to be followed, and perhaps the Lord may not wish to hereafter provide for me miraculously that which I now have in hand naturally. I do not see all the details clearly yet. But certainly over and above my own necessities—which will be simple—there is something to lay at once at the feet of the Lord. I am glad I have so much for Him."

"Don't let your enthusiasm run away with your common sense. Try to be practical."

"I think I am practical," said Hubert, smiling again, "although it is hard for a man to judge his own actions. It seems to me the practical way to give is *to give.* The people whom I consider impractical are those who, having an abundance for themselves, dole out pittances for the Lord and re-

gret they are so little! The poor, perplexed ladies in the missionary society vex their brains in planning how to 'raise' something for Him. They take mite-boxes themselves, and they encourage the gifts of the poor, the children, the babies—and even the dolls, I am told! It is very pathetic. But why does it never occur to them—to those who can afford it, I mean—to *give?* That is what I should call practical. I suppose Mrs. Greenman did not find much difficulty in 'raising' enough money to pay for her swell reception the day after the missionary meeting. I saw the street lined with carriages and heard an orchestra playing inside as I passed. We can imagine the decorations and the fine gowning. Now that was practical. What she wanted was a fine display, and she practically put her hand in her pocket and paid for it. But she says they cannot all do what they would like for missions! Why do they plead poverty there? Mrs. Greenman would not like to have her husband poorly rated in Bradstreet's, and I am sure she did not wish to have her guests the other day think of poverty. But before the Lord—ah, maybe that is what they think it is to be *'poor in spirit!'* But if they would be honest! If she should say, now, in the missionary meeting: 'The amount raised is not what we might have given, but it is all we really wish to give in view of the luncheon parties, fine dresses, and all that sort of thing, that we find more important,' I think that way of putting it would be practical, and honest withal."

Mr. Gray actually laughed, and the sound was music to his son's ears.

"Very good, Hubert," he said. "You had better give them a lecture."

"Had I not better give them an object lesson?" Hubert suggested instead.

"There is one thing you cannot do," Mr. Gray said with a sly triumph. Hubert looked at him inquiringly. "You cannot give away your mother's legacy. The terms of the will provide for that. The property cannot be alienated."

Hubert looked at his father blankly for a moment. The fact stated he had quite forgotten.

"You are right," he exclaimed. Then his brow cleared of its blank surprise and he laughed. "That settles it about the rest," he said. "The income from that property will amply support me and any poor interests a humble missionary may have."

"Just so," said his father. "Or it might maintain a poor fool who had missed his calling and was sent home."

Hubert laughed again. "Quite so," he assented.

And so the clouds broke away from over the house of Gray. A restored mutual understanding gave relief amounting to joy even in the face of coming separation.

Hubert's enterprise, like a great ship, could not be launched hastily. Months of preparation passed in which the business matter was finally settled and other affairs adjusted. It was finally concluded that the entire business of Robert Gray & Son should be sold, as the senior partner did not wish to carry it on without his son.

"It is not a question of the poor-house if you do give it up now, father," Hubert said to him, and he assented.

The missionary-to-be found himself called to many places to speak on behalf of the cause, and he did so with great readiness. His intense ardor caused

his words to burn their way into many hearts. Again and again his own heart was overwhelmed within him by the greatness of his theme. Cold figures became burning facts as he looked at the wide areas untouched by the Gospel. The slighted wish of his Lord became an anguish in his soul. That men and women should call themselves by His name and still live unto themselves, never grieved by His message undelivered, His errand of love undone, was a shame intolerable. Sometimes when the passion for his Lord's will swept his soul, and he beheld in contrast the idle hands of the church, paralyzed by pleasure or filled with self-interests, in secret he cast himself upon his face and wept as only a strong man, unused to tears, can weep.

The heart of Robert Gray turned with increasing fondness to his daughter who still saw her place to be at his side. A great comfort was she to him in these days of trial. For herself, Winifred was finding out afresh "the sweetness of an accepted sorrow." The joy of the Lord was inexpressible. She could scarcely understand the gladness that filled her soul after sacrifice "more than when their corn and their wine increased."

"Why are you so radiant?" Adèle asked in one of their many conferences.

"I do not know," she answered, blushing at being surveyed so admiringly. "But do you remember that Psalm, Adèle, that says:

> "'O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me,
> Let them bring me unto thy holy hill'—

that is getting very near to God, Adèle—

> "'And to thy tabernacles.

"That is nearer still; but listen to that that comes next:

> "'Then will I go unto the altar of God,
> Unto God my exceeding joy.'

"I think this is the reason why I am so happy. His light and His truth have led me to His holy precincts and I have gone to His altar—to the altar of burnt offering. And, Adèle,"—her eyes filled with tears of an inexpressible gladness—"it is *there* we find Him to be our 'exceeding joy.' I cannot explain it—I cannot even tell it—but He is '*my exceeding joy!*'"

"I know," said Adèle, her own eyes filling. "I have found Him there. And I think one reason why so many Christians seem to have no joy is because they have not come to His altar in the sense you mean. Perhaps they have seen Christ there for them in some sense, but have never quite taken their place there with Him. Do you remember, too, Winifred, that it was when the burnt offering began on that great occasion in Hezekiah's time that 'the song of the Lord began also?'"

"Oh, yes!" Winifred responded. "'The song of the Lord!' It has surely begun here, Adèle."

And so it had, indeed. That evening as Hubert returned from a busy day in town he found his sister singing:

> "'O joy that seekest me through pain,
> I cannot close my heart to thee;
> I trace the rainbow through the rain,
> And feel the promise is not vain
> That morn shall tearless be.'"

"Singing, little sister?" was his greeting.

"Yes, Hubert. That has been much of my occupation to-day."

"That is good," he replied. "By the way, I heard some news in town to-day." He endeavored to speak carelessly, but looked at her apprehensively.

"Yes? What is it?"

He walked to the window and examined a flower with apparent interest.

"I hear that George Frothingham's engagement to Miss Randolph, the banker's daughter, is announced."

"Yes," said Winifred calmly, "I saw that in the morning paper. You need not have been afraid to tell me, Hubert. His engagement is a matter of perfect indifference to me."

"Thank the Lord!" Hubert exclaimed impulsively.

"Amen," she responded, still calmly.

On another evening Hubert returned with still another piece of news. He had gone to the Cleary Street Mission to speak, and was late in returning. Winifred, who loved to hear accounts of all his meetings, waited up for him. She was in her little sitting-room when he returned. He came straight to her door and answered her ready "come in" with a light step and glowing face. He plunged at the special matter of joy at once.

"Winifred," he said, "I am not going to China alone."

The color changed in her face at the sudden announcement.

"Who—who is it, Hubert? Is it—?"

"Adèle."

"Oh, Hubert, I am so glad!" she cried joyfully, and kissed him in warm congratulation.

Then suddenly the thought of her own loss in-

truded. Must she give her up also? Her eager gladness turned to a burst of tears. How swept of all whom she had loved, except her dear father, seemed the home scenes now. She would gladly have restrained herself for Hubert's sake, but the sudden grief was uncontrollable. She sobbed convulsively, as when years ago some childish grief had broken in storms upon her and Hubert had stood by in tearless but painful sympathy, suggesting boyish consolations, ready to sacrifice any plaything or possession that might mend her broken heart. Now he stood helplessly before this passionate outburst.

"Forgive me, Winifred," he said contritely, "it is cruel of me to take her away."

"No, it isn't," sobbed Winifred. "It is just—what I—wished. Only—I shall—miss her so!"

"Of course," he replied pitifully.

The storm subsided, and Winifred looked at her brother apologetically.

"I am ashamed," she said, still with long catches in her breath. "I couldn't help it. I am not sorry—she is going—I am very glad!"

"You are very brave," he said.

"But it's true," she persisted. "It's all over now, Hubert. I shall not cry like that again. Let us talk about it."

They talked about it till the small hours came. Winifred's face cleared of every trace of sorrow, and she loved to think of the cheer and help that Hubert would have in the far-off land. No braver heart of all they knew could have been found to share his pilgrimage; and they imagined how Adèle's keen sense of humor might turn many a sorry happening into mirth. Also she had served an apprenticeship

here among the poor and outcast whom she had come to love and who loved her well.

"Winifred," said Hubert suddenly in the midst of their conversation, "Gerald Bond is to preach for Dr. Schoolman next Sunday."

For some reason best known to himself he watched her countenance narrowly as he made the announcement. But her fair face showed only sweet unconsciousness.

"Really?" she said. "I am very glad."

"We must have him with us if we can. I long to talk with him about these new things."

"Certainly. You must invite him, Hubert."

"Winnie," said her brother, "I seem to have a spirit of prophesy upon me to-night. Almost I can see the path before us with some of its lights and shadows. Oh, there will be compensations for all sorrows!"

"I know it," she said earnestly.

"You will say it is my own great joy that God has given that makes me prophesy. Perhaps it is. But I see this, Winnie; He will never be in our debt when we yield our all to Him. Sweet surprises, unlooked for joys, will be thrown in all the way. Goodness and mercy shall follow us all our days!"

"I believe it, Hubert, and then—we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever!"

He drew her to the low open window, and they stepped together into the balcony. The lights of the city were still burning, but in the east a flickering star was proclaiming the not distant advent of a greater light.

"Do you see the parable in lights, Winnie? See how brightly the street is lighted. No one need lose his way or bemoan the darkness, though it is night.

But yonder is a prophet of a fuller light. He is saying, 'The sun will come.' Here is my parable: It is night, surely, while our Lord is still away. But He gives us light. No way will ever be cheerless for you and me, little sister. I know He will give me as I go numberless pleasures, fresh interests, and boundless consolation in Himself for all that is left behind. And for you, Winifred, I almost see some rare, sweet blessings over your dear head, just ready to fall upon it."

"Yes," said Winifred, "I am sure it's true. I have been singing to-day,

> "'Glory to Thee for all the grace
> I have not tasted yet!'"

"These are like the lights in the city, Winnie, but there is a day-star in our hearts that is foretelling the perfect day. Presently the grace of the journeying shall give way to the eternal glory—to the home-coming! Look, sister, do you see that impulse of the dawn, as though the darkness pulsated with premonition of its coming?"

"Yes," said Winifred, with deep gladness in her voice. "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

THE END

DATE DUE

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